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SELECTED ESSAYS OF  
FREDERIC HARRISON



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# SELECTED ESSAYS LITERARY AND HISTORICAL

BY  
FREDERIC HARRISON

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,  
BY  
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TO THE ALLAHABAD UNIVERSITY

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## NOTE

ABOUT a year before his death, Mr. Frederic Harrison was good enough to write to me giving his consent to my making this selection. I had hoped to show my gratitude by presenting him with it ; but before the preliminaries for its publication could be settled, his life came to a close, and I can now only record here my sense of profound obligation for the kind letters which he wrote to me and his readiness to give me all the assistance I needed. I have also received and gratefully acknowledge valued assistance from my esteemed friend and teacher, Professor S. G. Dunn.

A. J.

ALLAHABAD,  
*October 2, 1924.*



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# INTRODUCTION

FREDERIC HARRISON

## I

FREDERIC HARRISON was born in 1831, and died on January 13, 1923. He was born before the age of "lucifer matches, railways, telegraphs, penny post, or even household suffrage," and during the ninety-two years of his life he had seen far-reaching, not to say revolutionary, changes. Few writers have been more prolific and more communicative. No false modesty stood in the way of his self-revelation. In *Memories and Thoughts* he gave a full and intimate account of his career which may with advantage be reproduced here in a condensed form :

"At the age of nine I went to reside in London, and for two years was taught in a day school by Joseph King of Maida Hill, the most admirable schoolmaster I have ever known. At the age of eleven I went to King's College School, which I left as second in the school in 1849. I was a boy at school when the great movement of 1848 swept over Europe, shook down so many thrones, and opened the era of so many wars of race and of frontier. Cram-full of Livy and Tacitus,

Thucydides and Xenophon, Corneille and Schiller, Milton, Byron and Shelley, at the precise age when youths debate whether despotisms or republics are to be preferred, when they write essays on the character of Julius Cæsar or Cromwell, compose odes to Liberty and Latin verses on Brutus and Tarquin, we were just ready to be impressed with the tumultuous succession of events which surged across Europe in 1848-49. It was difficult for a youth entering manhood between the years 1848 and 1852 not to be an ardent politician. Gradually I settled into a deep, lasting, and passionate sympathy with the popular cause everywhere and in all forms. By the time I was twenty-five, I had seen most of the principal cities of France, Germany, and Northern Italy; I had some knowledge of the language, circumstances, and recent history of all of these countries; I was a republican by conviction, had a deep enthusiasm for the popular cause throughout Europe, and was inclined to the Socialist solution of the great class question.

“I went up to Oxford from school in 1849; at a time when the great controversy in theology, which shook the Church and led to the conversion of Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Manning, and many others, was passing into a new phase. Liberalism was in the ascendant, and the dominant thought presented to me was Positive rather than Catholic. J. Stuart Mill, George Grote, Arnold and his historical school, Comte and his Positive School, were the influences under which my mind was formed. I spent six years at Oxford as student, fellow, and tutor. Whilst at Oxford, with science and metaphysics I took no serious

pains, though I tried to make out what they came to in the end. But almost every phase of theology, every age in history, and every scheme of social and political philosophy, supplied me with matter for thought, and in turn commanded my sympathy. As a student at College, I slowly came to regard the entire scheme of theology as an open question; and I ultimately left the University, about the age of twenty-four, without assured belief in any form of supernatural doctrine.

“ For the first thirty years of my life I was essentially a learner, but only in part a student of books. Never having been a great reader, and not having acquired the passion of pure study, I cared mainly for men, things, places, and people. As a student and then a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, I read quite as much history and philosophy as law; and I tried to correct my defective training in science by following the lectures of Owen, Huxley, Tyndall, Liveing, and others, with the proper text-books and studies in the museums. For some years I worked as a teacher in the Working Men's College, under F. Denison Maurice, along with Tom Hughes and his colleagues. For three years I served on the Trades Union Commission, and then was Secretary to the Digest Commission.

“ I have always tried to make out political movements by personal intercourse with those who led them. I went to Italy after the campaign of 1859, at the crisis of the foundation of the Italian Kingdom, and had conversations with Mazzini, Garibaldi, and many of the men who governed Italy in 1859 and who made the northern kingdom. In the same way I followed up the history of the Third Republic in France and the

Communal insurrection of 1871. I have had conversations with Gambetta, with his lieutenants, and with the leaders of many Socialist and republican parties. No study and no books can supply the place of personal intercourse with those who know and those who lead. I am sure whole libraries would not give me what I have gained in converse with Gambetta, Mazzini, Renan, Michelet, Louis Blanc, Tourgenieff, F. Newman, G. H. Lewes, John Bright, J. Stuart Mill, Carlyle, G. Eliot, Ruskin, Cardinal Manning, John Dillon, John Burns, Spencer, Comte, John Morley, and Gladstone.

“I was nearly thirty before I published anything at all. My first article happened to be on ‘Essays and Reviews.’ My profession was the law, the practice of which I followed for some fifteen years without great zest and without any ambition. I afterward taught jurisprudence as professor; and, having inherited a modest fortune, which I have had no desire to increase, I eventually withdrew to my present occupation of urging on my neighbours opinions which meet, I must admit, with but moderate acceptance.”

The modest reference above to his Oxford career does not reveal the fact that he took a first-class degree in Classics. Of University education he says: “I have now an experience of over forty years as student, teacher, and examiner; and it forces on me a profound conviction that our modern education is hardening into a narrow and debasing mill. Education is over-driven, over-systematised, monotonous, mechanical. The round of endless examination reduces education to a professional ‘cram,’ where the repeti-

tion of given formulas passes for knowledge, and where the accurate memory of some teacher's 'tips' takes the place of thought." The same criticism has often been heard since these forcible words were written.

In 1886, Harrison attempted, without success, to get into Parliament as the representative of the University of London. No one need regret his failure. In all probability he would only have added to the long list of distinguished men of letters who have failed to gain the attention or acquire the manner of the House of Commons. But his marvellous energy could not be satisfied with mere intellectual effort. He longed for a while for a life of action, and he spent five years on the London County Council as an Alderman. For twenty-five years he was chief of the English Positivists. He lectured to the Inns of Court on Jurisprudence and International Law. He was, besides, Rede Lecturer at Cambridge, Washington Lecturer at Chicago, and Herbert Spencer Lecturer at Oxford, and became a Fellow of the Royal Society.

## II

Frederic Harrison was fortunate in his friendships. As he has himself said in the passage quoted above, these friendships were to him a better education than any books or libraries. It is always interesting to read what his contemporaries say about a man, and modern memoirs and biographies are full of references to Frederic Harrison. Lord Morley in his *Recollections* (i. 79) mentions him in the same breath with Arnold,

Swinburne, Meredith, Pater, and says (*Recollections*, i. 63-64): "Frederic Harrison, in those days incomparable as controversialist, powerful in historical sense and knowledge, became one of my most intimate and attached friends for fifty years."

With George Eliot, too, and George Henry Lewes he was on terms of intimacy. He met her first on New Year's Day, 1860, at the house of Dr. and Mrs. Richard Congreve; twenty-one years later, almost to a day, he was one of the mourners who followed her body to the grave in Highgate Cemetery. Of the society which centred round the magnetic personality of George Eliot, Lord Morley said (*Recollections*, i. 338): "I have never known such high perfection of social intercourse as the Thursday dinners at the Priory in days when society let her alone. The guests were always the same, understood one another, spoke the same language, Spencer, Browning, Congreve, Theodore Martin, Harrison; talk of serious things without solemnity; nobody wanting to shine or to carry a point or to interject a last word; all kept in sympathetic play by Lewes's sparkling good-humour." Harrison was of considerable assistance to George Eliot in affording her his legal advice; he had the gift of drawing her out, and she wrote to him several letters expressing her views on many an important subject. Thus, on one occasion, he had, evidently, proposed some theme for her consideration. "That," she replied on 15th August, 1866, "is a tremendously difficult problem which you have laid before me; and I think you see its difficulties, though they can hardly press on you as they do on me, who

have gone through again and again the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me just in the flesh, and not in the spirit. I think æsthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching, because it deals with life in its highest complexity ; but if it ceases to be purely æsthetic, if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram, it becomes the most offensive of all teaching " (Leslie Stephen's *George Eliot*, 158).

With Leslie Stephen himself, Harrison's relations were cordial. Writing in the *Cornhill* (April, 1904), Harrison said : " It was indeed a liberal education to a young Alpine climber to spend a few days with Leslie Stephen and his Oberlanders in the crags and the snow-fields which he loved, as if they were his native home—as if they were the Delectable Mountains where the Pilgrim might at last find blessedness and rest. The Alps were to Stephen the elixir of life, a revelation, a religion " (Maitland's *Leslie Stephen*, 103). That Harrison himself shared this enthusiasm is abundantly clear from his book on his Alpine Jubilee.

His energy even in old age was remarkable, and was the envy and despair of others less fortunately endowed with vitality. On August 2, 1915, Mr. Stopford Brooke wrote to Harrison : " You are a wonderful person to be able to walk two hours a day, and to go through all that sadness and pain in France and to rush almost through all the other useful work you do so well. I wish I could do one-tenth as much " (L. P. Jacks' *Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke*, ii. 680). There is an earlier tribute to his energy and buoyancy

of spirits. On the 18th of July, 1896, that strangely eccentric, but gifted man, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, recorded: "I found Harrison at cricket with his boys, now grown-up young men, but they came in presently, and I played a set of lawn-tennis with the philosopher, and spent a pleasant evening, discussing his creed of Humanity, and mine of anti-Humanity. . . . He has some right to believe in Humanity, as he has never had a pain or ache or a sleepless night in his life, and he is past sixty. Thus in half-serious humour we passed the evening. There is nobody in the world less like a philosopher or a religious leader than the good Harrison" (*My Diaries*, i. 287).

### III

When he first came as an undergraduate to Oxford, Harrison was a devout Christian, subscribing dutifully to the creeds, believing in the Bible, and perfectly devout in practice. When he left the University he was a free-thinker. He said: "Yeast [Kingsley], Maurice, F. Newman's *Theism*, Mill, and Mazzini, together, made my orthodoxy melt away. The whole orthodox fabric slowly melted away in me, mainly on moral grounds, such as F. Newman and F. D. Maurice used, and from growing disgust with such Catholicism as that of J. H. Newman and Pusey." Much later he wrote: "I was quite thirty-five before I fully absorbed the Positive system. I had been a systematic student of it for ten or twelve years before. For my part, the acceptance of the general principles of Auguste Comte has been the result of very long and unremitting study,



and it proceeded by a series of marked stages. First his view of history commanded my assent ; then his scheme of education ; next his social Utopia ; then the politics ; after this his general view of philosophy ; and finally the religious scheme in its main features. Even now I am regarded by some Comtists *pur sang* as a profane amateur, a schismatic, and a Gallio. And while cynics outside accuse me of fanaticism, some of my fellow-believers suspect me of heresy." This notwithstanding, Harrison became the foremost of Positivists in England and the President of the English branch. In his *Philosophy of Commonsense*, he said what he thought to be the leading idea of Positivism : ' True Religion is the combination of Belief, Worship and Discipline. Humanity demands from us the best of our brains, of our hearts, of our conduct.' In *George Washington, etc.*, he drew a picture of the Positivist Ideal of Republic, an antecedent condition of which, according to him, is the existence of a living religion of Humanity. He was to the last a firm adherent of Comte's creed.

## IV

As a writer of prose, Frederic Harrison is entitled to high praise. He had not, it is true, the volcanic intensity of Carlyle, the sweetness of Newman, the music and rhythm of Ruskin. But he had other gifts which were frequently brought into use—directness, incisiveness, force, energy, a vast store of information, aptness of illustration, and ever and anon the prophet's wrath and anticipation of judgment to come. As a

controversialist it may be admitted that he was cruel, he hit hard, he shattered some popular idols. But his aim throughout was to emphasise the sovereign qualities of reason and commonsense. Some of his early articles in the *Fortnightly Review* were no little of a shock to the self-complacency of Victorian England.

He met with the opposition which is the fate of all who, in a time of inelastic doctrines and narrow sympathies, preach the wider verities without reference to school or sect. His manner was not what is called winning. It will be noticed that frequently he loses his balance, enters into too many details, is attracted more by events and men and concrete instances than by movements and ideas, not infrequently goes neither very far nor very deep, is content to play upon the surface, and contributes little that has abiding value. At its best, however, his style is noble, manly and clear. He never forgot, and often repeated to others, Matthew Arnold's counsel to him: "Flee Carlylese as the very devil." He succeeded in evolving a style of his own which achieved vigour and picturesqueness without eccentricity. Its phrases constantly echo or suggest those of the great masters of all literature of whom he was so ardent and worthy a disciple.

## V

Long after his early companions had gone to their rest, and after a long and honourable career of public service, Frederic Harrison passed away and created

a void which it will be difficult to fill. Historian, biographer, philosopher, politician, critic, scholar, Alpine climber, Frederic Harrison resembled in his encyclopædic range of interests and learning the masters of an earlier age. To those who knew him, the memory of the man will be a rich possession. He had a face of rare charm. The beard, the eyebrows, the moustaches were snow-white. There were wrinkles on the face, but such as could only be due to the passage of time, not to any cares or crosses. The eyes looked straight ahead, undaunted, as though there was nothing of which he need be ashamed or afraid. The eyebrows were shaggy ; the mouth firm. It was by no means the face of a recluse. While it unquestionably revealed the scholar, it did not disavow the man of affairs. Harrison confronted the advancing years with courage, and they treated him leniently. Far advanced into his ninety-second year, he wrote in a firm hand, the letters well-formed, the strokes clear. The hand is now motionless, and the big, brave heart is still. In the long and glorious annals of English letters an honoured place will be assigned to Frederic Harrison.

AMARANATHA JHA.

## FREDERIC HARRISON'S WORKS

*Order and Progress*, 1875 ; *The Choice of Books*, 1886 ; *Oliver Cromwell*, 1888 ; *The Meaning of History*, 1894 ; *Studies in Early Victorian Literature*, 1895-1897 ; *William the Silent*, 1897 ; *Annals of an Old Manor-House*, 1899 ; *Tennyson, Ruskin, and Mill*, 1899 ; *Byzantine History*, 1900 ; *American Addresses*, 1901 ; *John Ruskin*, 1902 ; *Thcophano*, 1904 ; *Chatham*, 1905 ; *Herbert Spencer*, 1905 ; *Nicephorus*, 1906 ; *Memories and Thought*, 1906 ; *The Creed of a Layman*, 1907 ; *The Philosophy of Commonsense*, 1907 ; *My Alpine Jubilee*, 1908 ; *National and Social Problems*, 1908 ; *Realities and Ideals*, 1908 ; *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 2 vols., 1911 ; *Among My Books*, 1912 ; *The Positive Evolution of Religion*, 1912 ; *The German Peril*, 1915 ; *On Society*, 1918 ; *Obiter Scripta*, 1919 ; *Jurisprudence and the Conflict of Laws*, 1919 ; *Novissima Verba*, 1920 ; *De Senectute*, 1923.

# MATTHEW ARNOLD

## AS POET AND CRITIC

THE very name of Matthew Arnold calls up to memory a set of apt phrases and proverbial labels which have passed into our current literature, and are most happily redolent of his own peculiar turn of thought. How could modern criticism be carried on were it forbidden to speak of 'culture,' of 'urbanity,' of 'Philistinism,' of 'distinction,' of 'the *note* of provinciality,' of 'the great style'? What a convenient shorthand is it to refer to 'Barbarians,' to 'the young lions of the Press,' to 'Arminius,' to 'the Zeit-Geist'—and all the personal and impersonal objects of our great critic's genial contempt!

It is true that our young lions (whose feeding-time appears to be our breakfast-hour) have roared themselves almost hoarse over some of these sayings and nicknames, and even the 'note of provinciality' has become a little provincial. But how many of these pregnant phrases have been added to the debates of philosophy and even of religion! 'The stream of tendency that makes for righteousness,' 'sweetness and light'—not wholly in Swift's sense, and assuredly not in Swift's temper—either of spirit or of brain—'sweet reasonableness,' are more than mere labels or

phrases: they are ideas, gospels—at least, aphorisms. The judicious reader may recall the rest of these epigrams for himself, for to set forth any copious catalogue of them would be to indite a somewhat leonine essay oneself. Lord Beaconsfield, himself so great a master of memorable and prolific phrases, with admirable insight recognised this rare gift of our Arminius, and he very justly said that it was a ‘great thing to do—a great achievement.’

Now this gift of sending forth to ring through a whole generation a phrase which immediately passes into a proverb, which stamps a movement or a set of persons with a distinctive cognomen, or condenses a mode of judging them into a portable aphorism—this is a very rare power, and one peculiarly rare amongst Englishmen. Carlyle had it, Disraeli had it, but how few others amongst our contemporaries! Arnold’s current phrases still in circulation are more numerous than those of Disraeli, and are more simple and apt than Carlyle’s. These *ἔπεα πτερόεντα* fly through the speech of cultivated men, pass current in the marketplace; they are generative, efficient, and issue into act. They may be right or wrong, but at any rate they do their work: they teach, they guide, possibly may mislead, but they are alive. It was noteworthy, and most significant, how many of these familiar phrases of Arnold’s were Greek. He was never tired of recommending to us the charms of ‘Hellenism,’ of *εὐφυΐα*, of *epieikeia*, the supremacy of Homer, ‘the classical spirit.’ He loved to present himself to us as *εὐφυής*, as *ἐπεικής*, as *καλοκάγαθός*; he had been sprinkled with some of the Attic salt of Lucian, he

was imbued with the classical genius—and never so much as in his poems.

His poetry had the classical spirit in a very peculiar and rare degree; and we can have little doubt now, when so much of Arnold's prose work in criticism has been accepted as standard opinion, and so much of his prose work in controversy has lost its interest and savour, that it is his poetry which will be longest remembered, and there his finest vein was reached. It may be said that no poet in the roll of our literature, unless it be Milton, has been so essentially saturated to the very bone with the classical genius. And I say this without forgetting *Ænone*, or the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, or the *Prometheus Unbound*, or *Atalanta in Calydon*; for I am thinking of the entire compass of all the productions of these poets, who are very often romantic and fantastic. But we can find hardly a single poem of Arnold's that is far from the classical idea.

His poetry, however, is 'classical' only in a general sense, not that all of it is imitative of ancient models or has any affectation of archaism. It is essentially modern in thought, and has all that fetishistic worship of natural objects which is the true note of our Wordsworthian school. But Arnold is 'classical' in the serene self-command, the harmony of tone, the measured fitness, the sweet reasonableness of his verse. This balance, this lucidity, this Virgilian dignity and grace, may be said to be unfailing. Whatever be its shortcomings and its limitations, Arnold's poetry maintains this unerring urbanity of form. There is no thunder, no rant, no discord, no honey, no intoxica-

#### 4     ESSAYS FROM FREDERIC HARRISON

tion of mysticism or crash of battle in him. Our poet's eye doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; but it is never caught 'in a fine frenzy rolling.' It is in this sense that Arnold is classical, that he has, and has uniformly and by instinct, some touch of that 'liquid clearness of an Ionian sky' which he felt in Homer. Not but what he is, in thought and by suggestion, one of the most truly modern, the most frankly contemporary, of all our poets.

It is no doubt owing to this constant appeal of his to modern thought, and in great degree to the best and most serious modern thought, that Arnold's poetry is welcomed by a somewhat special audience. But for that very reason it is almost certain to gain a wider audience, and to grow in popularity and influence. His own prose has perhaps not a little retarded the acceptance of his verse. The prose is of far greater bulk than his verse: it deals with many burning questions, especially those of current politics and theological controversies; and it supplies whole menageries of young lions with perennial bones of contention and succulent morsels wherewith to lick their lips. How could the indolent, or even the industrious reviewer, tear himself from the delight of sucking in 'the three Lord Shaftesburys'—or it may be from spitting them forth with indignation—in order to meditate with Empedocles or Thyrsis in verses which are at once 'sober, steadfast, and demure'?

The full acceptance of Arnold's poetry has yet to come. And in order that it may come in our time, we should be careful not to over-praise him, not to create



him with qualities that he never had. His peculiar distinction is his unfailing level of thoughtfulness, of culture, and of balance. Almost alone amongst our poets since Milton, Arnold is never incoherent, spasmodic, careless, washy, or *banal*. He never flies up into a region where the sun melts his wings ; he strikes no discords, and he never tries a mood for which he has no gift. He has more general insight into the intellectual world of our age, and he sees into it more deeply and more surely, than any contemporary poet. He has a trained thirst for nature ; but his worship of nature never weakens his reverence of man, and his brooding over man's destiny. On the other hand, he has little passion, small measure of dramatic sense, but a moderate gift of movement or of colour, and—what is perhaps a more serious want—no sure ear for melody and music.

As poet, Arnold belongs to an order very rare with us, in which Greece was singularly rich—the order of *gnomic* poets, who condensed in metrical aphorisms their thoughts on human destiny and the moral problems of life. The type is found in the extant fragments of Solon, of Xenophanes, and above all of Theognis. The famous maxim of Solon—*μηδὲν ἄγαν* (nothing overdone)—might serve as a maxim for Arnold. But of all the *gnomic* poets of Greece, the one with whom Arnold has most affinity is Theognis. Let us compare the one hundred and eight fragments of Theognis, as they are paraphrased by J. Hookham Frere, with the *Collected Poems* of Arnold, and the analogy will strike us at once : the stoical resolution, the disdain of vulgarity, the aversion from civic brawls,

## 6    ESSAYS FROM FREDERIC HARRISON

the aloofness from the rudeness of the populace and the coarseness of ostentatious wealth. The seventeenth fragment of *Frere* might serve as a motto for Arnold's poems and for Arnold's temper—

“ I walk by rule and measure, and incline  
To neither side, but take an even line ;  
Fix'd in a single purpose and design.  
With learning's happy gifts to celebrate,  
To civilise and dignify the State ;  
Not leaguings with the discontented crew,  
Nor with the proud and arbitrary few.”

This is the very keynote of so many poems, of *Culture and Anarchy*, of ‘sweetness and light,’ of *epieikeia* ; it is the tone of the *euphues*, of the *τετράγωνος ἀνὲν ψόγου*, of the ‘wise and good.’

This intensely gnomic, meditative, and ethical vein in Arnold's poetry runs through the whole of his singularly equable work, from the earliest sonnets to the latest domestic elegies. His Muse, as he sings himself, is ever

“ Radiant, adorn'd outside ; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.”

This deep undertone of thought and of austerity gives a uniform and somewhat melancholy colour to every line of his verse, not despairing, not pessimist, not querulous, but with a resolute and pensive insight into the mystery of life and of things, reminding us of those lovely tombs in the *Cerameicus* at Athens, of Hegeso and the rest, who in immortal calm and grace stand ever bidding to this fair earth a long and sweet farewell. Like other gnomic poets, Arnold is ever

running into the tone of elegy ; and he is quite at his best in elegy. Throughout the whole series of his poems it would be difficult to find any, even the shorter sonnets, which did not turn upon this pensive philosophy of life, unless we hold the few Narrative Poems to be without it. His mental food, he tells us, was found in Homer, Sophocles, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius ; and his graver pieces sound like some echo of the imperial *Meditations*, cast into the form of a Sophoclean chorus.

Of more than one hundred pieces, short or long, that Arnold has left, only a few here and there can be classed as poems of fancy, pure description, or frank surrender of the spirit to the sense of joy and of beauty. Whether he is walking in Hyde Park or lounging in Kensington Gardens, apostrophising a gipsy child, recalling old times in Rugby Chapel, mourning over a college friend, or a dead bird, or a pet dog, he always comes back to the dominant problems of human life. As he buries poor ' Geist,' he speculates on the future life of man ; as he laments ' Matthias ' dying in his cage, he moralises on the limits set to our human sympathy. With all his intense enjoyment of nature, and his acute observation of nature, it never ends there. One great lesson, he says, nature is ever teaching, it is blown in every wind : the harmony of labour and of peace—*ohne Hast, ohne Rast*. Every natural sight and sound has its moral warning ; a yellow primrose is not a primrose to him and nothing more : it reveals the poet of the primrose. The ethical lesson of nature, which is the uniform burden of Arnold's poetry, has been definitely summed up by

him in the sonnet to a preacher who talked loosely of our 'harmony with nature'—

" Know, man hath all which nature hath, but more,  
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good."

Not only is Arnold what Aristotle called *ἠθικώτατος*, a moralist in verse, but his moral philosophy of life and man is at once large, wise, and deep. He is abreast of the best modern thought, and he meets the great problems of destiny, and what is now called the 'foundations of belief,' like a philosopher, and not like a rhetorician, a sentimentalist, or a theologian. The essential doctrine of his verse is the spirit of his own favourite hero, Marcus Aurelius, having (at least in aspiration if not in performance) the same stoicism, dignity, patience, and gentleness, and no little of the same pensive and ineffectual resignation under insoluble problems. Not to institute any futile comparison of genius, it must be conceded that Arnold in his poetry dwells in a higher philosophic æther than any contemporary poet. He has a wider learning, a cooler brain, and a more masculine logic. It was not in vain that Arnold was so early inspired by echoes of Empedocles, to whom his earliest important poem was devoted, the philosopher-poet of early Greece, whom the Greeks called Homeric, and whose 'austere harmony' they valued so well. Arnold's sonnet on 'The Austerity of Poetry,' of which two lines have been cited above, is a mere amplification of this type of poetry as an idealised philosophy of nature and of life.

This concentration of poetry on ethics and even metaphysics involves very serious limitations and much

loss of charm. The gnomic poets of Greece, though often cited for their maxims, were the least poetic of the Greek singers, and the least endowed with imagination. Aristotle calls Empedocles more 'the natural philosopher than the poet.' Solon indeed, with all his wisdom, can be as tedious as Wordsworth, and Theognis is usually prosaic. Arnold is never prosaic, and almost never tedious; but the didactic poet cannot possibly hold the attention of the groundlings for long. *Empedocles on Etna*, published at the age of thirty-one, still remains his most characteristic piece of any length, and it is in some ways his high-water mark of achievement. It has various moods, lyrical, didactic, dramatic—rhyme, blank verse, monologue, and song—it has his philosophy of life, his passion for nature, his enthusiasm for the undying memories of Greece. It is his typical poem; but the average reader finds its twelve hundred lines too long, too austere, too indecisive; and the poet himself withdrew it for years, from a sense of its monotony of doubt and sadness.

The high merit of Arnold's verse is the uniform level of fine, if austere thought, embodied in clear, apt, graceful, measured form. He keeps a firm hand on his Pegasus, and is always lucid, self-possessed, dignified, with a voice perfectly attuned to the feeling and thought within him. He always knew exactly what he wished to say, and he always said it exactly. He is thus one of the most correct, one of the least faulty, of all our poets: as Racine was 'correct' and faultless, as in the supreme degree was the eternal type of all that is correct and faultless in form—Sophocles himself.

As a poet, Arnold was indeed our *Maestro senza errore*, but to be faultless is not to be of the highest rank. And we must confess that in exuberance of fancy, in imagination, in glow and rush of life, in tumultuous passion, in dramatic pathos, Arnold cannot claim any high rank at all. He has given us indeed but little of the kind, and hardly enough to judge him. His charming farewell lines to his dead pet's, the dogs, the canary, and the cat, are full of tenderness, quaint playfulness, grace, wit, worthy of Cowper. The *For-saken Merman* and *Tristram and Iseult* have passages of delightful fancy and of exquisite pathos. If any one doubt if Arnold had a true imagination, apart from his gnomic moralities, let him consider the conclusion of *The Church of Brou*. The gallant Duke of Savoy, killed in a boar hunt, is buried by his young widow in a magnificent tomb in the memorial Church of Brou, and so soon as the work is completed, the broken-hearted Duchess dies and is laid beside him underneath their marble effigies. The poet stands beside the majestic and lonely monument, and he breaks forth—

“ So sleep, for ever sleep, O marble Pair !  
 Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair  
 On the carved western front a flood of light  
 Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright  
 Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave,  
 In the vast western window of the nave ;  
 And on the pavement round the Tomb there glints  
 A chequer-work of glowing sapphire-tints,  
 And amethyst, and ruby—then uncloset  
 Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,  
 And from your broider'd pillows lift your heads,  
 And rise upon your cold white marble beds ;

And, looking down on the warm rosy tints,  
Which chequer, at your feet, the illumined flints  
Say : *What is this ? we are in bliss—forgiven—  
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven !*  
Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain  
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain  
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls  
Shedding her pensive light at intervals  
The moon through the clere-story window shines,  
And the wind rushes through the mountain pines.  
Then, gazing up 'mid the dim pillars high,  
The foliated marble forest where ye lie,  
*Hush, ye will say, it is eternity !  
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these  
The columns of the heavenly palaces !*  
And, in the sweeping of the wind, your ear  
The passage of the Angel's wings will hear,  
And on the lichen-crustled leads above  
The rustle of the eternal rain of love."

I have cited this beautiful passage as a specimen of Arnold's poetic gift, apart from his gnomic quality of lucid thought. It is not his usual vein, but it serves to test his powers as a mere singer. It has fancy, imagination, metrical grace, along with some penury of rhyme, perfection of tone. Has it the magic of the higher poetry, the ineffable music, the unforgotten phrase? No one has ever analysed 'the liquid diction,' 'the fluid movement' of great poetry so lucidly as Arnold himself. The fluid movement indeed he shows not seldom, especially in his blank verse. *Sohrab and Rustum*, a fine poem all through, if just a little academic, has some noble passages, some quite majestic lines and Homeroeid similes. But the magic of music, the

unforgotten phrase, is not there. Arnold, who gave us in prose so many a memorable phrase, has left us in poetry hardly any such as fly upon the tongues of men, unless it be—"The weary Titan, staggering on to her goal," or "That sweet city with her dreaming spires." These are fine, but it is not enough.

Undoubtedly, Arnold from the first continually broke forth into some really Miltonic lines. Of Nature he cries out—

"Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting."

Or again, he says—

"Whereo'er the chariot wheels of life are roll'd  
In cloudy circles to eternity."

In the *Scholar Gipsy*, he says—

"Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes !  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed."

Arnold has at times the fluid movement, but only at moments and on occasions, and he has a pure and highly-trained sense of metrical rhythm. But he has not yet the finer and rarer sense of melodious music. We must even say more. He is insensitive to cacophonies that would have made Tennyson or Shelley 'gasp and stare.' No law of Apollo is more sacred than this : that he shall not attain the topmost crag of Parnassus who crams his mouth whilst singing with a handful of gritty consonants.

It is an ungracious task to point to the ugly features of poems that have unquestionably refined modulation and an exquisite polish. But where nature has with-



held the ear for music, no labour and no art can supply the want. And I would ask those who fancy that modulation and polish are equivalent to music to repeat aloud these lines amongst many—

“ The sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes.”  
“ Kept on after the grave, but not begun.”  
“ Couldst thou no better keep, O Abbey old ! ”  
“ The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky.”  
“ From heaths starr'd with broom,  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom.”

These last three lines are from the *Forsaken Merman*, wherein Arnold perhaps came nearest to the echo of music and to pure fantasy. In the grand lines to Shakespeare, he writes—

“ Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure.”

Here are seven sibilants, four ‘selfs,’ three ‘sc,’ and twenty-nine consonants against twelve vowels in one verse. It was not thus that Shakespeare himself wrote sonnets, as when he said—

“ Full many a glorious morning have I seen  
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye.”

It must be remembered that Arnold wrote but little verse, and most of it in early life ; that he was not by profession a poet, that he was a hard-worked inspector of schools all his days ; and that his prose work far exceeds his verse. This separates him from all his contemporary rivals, and partly explains his stiffness in rhyming, his small product, and his lack of melody. Had he been able like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, to regard himself from first to last as

a poet, to devote his whole life to poetry, to live the life "of thought and of austerity within"—which he craved as poet, but did not achieve as a man—then he might have left us poems more varied, more fanciful, more musical, more joyous. By temperament and by training, he, who at birth "was breathed on by the rural Pan," was deprived of that fountain of delight that is essential to the highest poetry, the dithyrambic glow—the ἀνίριθμον γέλασμα—

"The countless dimples of the laughing seas" <sup>1</sup>

of perennial poetry. This perhaps, more than his want of passion, of dramatic power, of rapidity of action, limits the audience of Arnold as a poet. But those who thirst for the pure Castalian spring, inspired by sustained and lofty thoughts, who care for that σπουδαιότης—that 'high seriousness,' of which he spoke so much as the very essence of the best poetry—have long known that they find it in Matthew Arnold more than in any of his even greater contemporaries.

About Matthew Arnold as critic of literature it is needless to enlarge, for the simple reason that we have all long ago agreed that he has no superior, indeed no rival. His judgments on our poets have passed into current opinion, and have ceased to be discussed or questioned. It is, perhaps, a grave loss to English literature that Arnold was not able, or perhaps never strove, to devote his whole life to the interpretation of our best poetry and prose, with the same systematic, laborious, concentrated energy which has placed Sainte

<sup>1</sup> From an unpublished translation of *Prometheus* by E. H. Pember, Q.C.

Beuve at the head of French critics. With his absorbing professional duties, his far from austere aloofness from the whirlpool of society, his guerilla warfare with journalism, Radicals, theologians, and all devotees of Dagon, it was not fated that Arnold could vie with the vast learning and Herculean industry of Sainte-Beuve. Neither as theologian, philosopher, nor publicist was Arnold at all adequately equipped by genius or by education for the office of supreme arbiter which he so airily, and perhaps so humorously, assumed to fill. And as poet, it is doubtful whether, with his Aurelian temperament and treacherous ear, he could ever have reached a much higher rank. But as critic of literature his exquisite taste, his serene sense of equity, and that genial magnanimity which prompted him to give just value for every redeeming quality of those whom he loved the least—this made him a consummate critic of style. Though he has not left us an exhaustive review of our literature, as Sainte-Beuve has done for France, he has given us a group of short, lucid, suggestive canons of judgment, which serve as landmarks to an entire generation of critics.

The function of criticism—though not so high and mighty as Arnold proclaimed it with superb assurance—is not so futile an art as the sixty-two minor poets and the eleven thousand minor novelists are now wont to think it. Arnold committed one of the few extravagances of his whole life when he told us that poetry was the criticism of life, that the function of criticism was to see all things as they really are in themselves—the very thing Kant told us we could never do. On the other hand, too much of what is now

called criticism is the improvised chatter of a raw lad, portentously ignorant of the matter in hand. It is not the 'indolent reviewer' that we now suffer under; but the 'lightning reviewer,' the young man in a hurry with a Kodak, who finally disposes of a new work on the day of its publication. One of them naïvely complained the other morning of having to cut the pages, as if we ever suspected that he cut the pages of more than the preface and table of contents.

Criticism, according to Arnold's practice, if not according to his theory, had as its duty to lay down decisive canons of cultured judgment, to sift the sound from the vicious, and to maintain the purity of language and of style. To do all this in any masterly degree requires most copious knowledge, an almost encyclopædic training in literature, a natural genius for form and tone, and above all a temper of judicial balance. Johnson in the eighteenth century, Hallam, and possibly Southey, in the nineteenth century, had some such gift; Macaulay and Carlyle had not, for they wanted genius for form and judicial balance. Now Arnold had this gift in supreme degree, in a degree superior to Johnson or to Hallam. He made far fewer mistakes than they did. He made very few mistakes. The touchstone of the great critic is to make very few mistakes, and never to be carried off his balance by any pet aversion or pet affection of his own, not to be biased so much as a hair's breadth by any salient merit or any irritating defect, and always to keep an eye well open to the true proportion of any single book in the great world of men and of affairs and in the mighty realm of general literature.

For this reason we have so very few great critics, for the combination of vast knowledge, keen taste, and serene judgment is rare. It is thus so hard for any young person, for women, to become great in criticism : the young lack the wider experience ; women lack the cool judicial temper. It is common enough to find those who are very sensitive to some rare charm, very acute to detect a subtle quality, or justly severe on some seductive failing. The rare power is to be able to apply to a complicated set of qualities the nicely adjusted compensations, to place a work, an author, in the right rank, and to do this for all orders of merit, with a sure, constant, unflinching touch—and without any real or conspicuous mistake.

This is what Arnold did, at any rate for our later poetry. He taught us to do it for ourselves, by using the instruments he brought to bear. He did much to kill a great deal of flashy writing and much vulgarity of mind that once had a curious vogue. I am accused of being *laudator temporis acti*, and an American newspaper was pleased to speak of me as “this hopeless old man” ; but I am never weary of saying, that at no epoch of our literature has the bulk of minor poetry been so graceful, so refined, so pure ; the English language in daily use has never been written in so sound a form by so many writers ; and the current taste in prose and verse has never been so just. And this is not a little owing to the criticism of Arnold, and to the ascendancy which his judgment exerted over his time.

To estimate that lucidity and magnanimity of judgment he possessed, we should note how entirely

open-minded he was to the defects of those whom he most loved, and to the merits of those whom he chiefly condemned. His ideal in poetry is essentially Wordsworthian, yet how sternly and how honestly he marks the *longueurs* of Wordsworth, his flatness, his mass of inferior work. Arnold's ideal of poetry was essentially alien to Byron, whose vulgar, slipshod, rhetorical manner he detested, whilst he recognised Byron's Titanic power—"our *soul* had felt him like the thunder's roll." Arnold saw all the blunders made by Dryden, by Johnson, by Macaulay, by Coleridge, by Carlyle—but how heartily he can seize their real merits! Though drawn by all his thoughts and tastes towards such writers as Sénancour, Amiel, Joubert, Heine, the Guérins, he does not affect to forget the limitations of their influence and the idiosyncrasy of their genius. In these days, when we are constantly assured that the function of criticism is to seize on some subtle and yet undetected quality that happens to have charmed you, and to wonder, in Delphic oracles, if Milton or Shelley ever quite touched that mystic circle, how refreshing it is to find Arnold always cool, always judicial—telling us even that Shakespeare has let drop some random stuff, and calmly reminding us that he had not "the sureness of a perfect style," as Milton had. Let us take together Arnold's summing up of all the qualities of Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and we shall see with what a just but loving hand he distributes the alternating of praise and blame.

Not that Arnold was invariably right, or that all his judgments are unassailable. His canons were always

right ; but it is not in mortals to apply them unerringly to men and to things. He seems somewhat inclined to undervalue Tennyson, of whom he speaks so little. He has not said enough for Shelley, perhaps not enough for Spenser, nor can we find that he loved with the true ardour the glorious romances of Walter Scott. But this is no place, nor can I pretend to be the man, to criticise our critic. For my own part, I accept his decisions in the main for all English poetry and on general questions of style. Accept them, that is, so far as it is in human nature to accept such high matters—'errors excepted,' *exceptis excipiendis*. The important point on which his judgment is the most likely to be doubted or reversed by the supreme court of the twentieth century, lies in the relative places he has assigned to Wordsworth and to Shelley. He was by nature akin to Wordsworth, alien to Shelley ; and the 'personal equation' may have told in this case. For my own part, I feel grateful to Arnold for asserting so well the dæmonic power of Byron, and so justly distinguishing the poet in his hour of inspiration from the peer in his career of affectation and vice. Arnold's piece on the 'Study of Poetry,' written as an introduction to the collected *English Poets*, should be preserved in our literature as the *norma* or *canon* of right opinion about poetry, as we preserve the standard coins in the Pyx, or the standard yard-measure in the old Jewel-house at Westminster.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This does not include mere *obiter dicta* in his familiar *Letters*. A great critic, like the Pope, is infallible only when he is speaking *ex cathedra*, on matters of faith.

## RUSKIN

### AS MASTER OF PROSE

THE world has long been of one mind as to the great charm in the writings of John Ruskin ; it feels his subtle insight into all forms of beauty ; and it has made familiar truisms of his central lessons in Art. But it has hardly yet understood that he stands forth now, alone and inimitable, as a supreme master of our English tongue ; that as preacher, prophet (nay, some amongst us do not hesitate to say as saint), he has done more than as master of Art ; that his moral and social influence on our time, more than his æsthetic impulse, will be the chief memory for which our descendants will hold him in honour.

Such genius, such zeal, such self-devotion should have imposed itself upon the age without a dissentient voice ; but the reputation of John Ruskin has been exposed to some singular difficulties. Above all, he is, to use an Italian phrase, *uomo antico* : a survival of a past age : a man of the thirteenth century pouring out sermons, denunciations, rhapsodies to the nineteenth century ; and if Saint Bernard himself, in his garb of frieze and girdle of hemp, were to preach amongst us in Hyde Park to-day, too many of us would listen awhile, and then straightway go about



our business with a smile. But John Ruskin is not simply a man of the thirteenth century—he is a poet, a mystic, a missionary of the thirteenth century—romantic as was the young Dante in the days of his love and his chivalrous youth and his Florentine rapture in all beautiful things, or as was the young Petrarch in the lifetime of his Laura, or the young Francis beginning to dream of a regeneration of Christendom through the teaching of his barefoot Friars.

Now John Ruskin not only is in his soul a thirteenth-century poet and mystic, but, being this, he would literally have the nineteenth century go back to the thirteenth: he means what he says, he acts on what he means. And he defies fact, the set of many ages, the actual generation around him, and still calls on them, alone and in spite of neglect and rebuffs, to go back to the Golden Ages of the Past. He would not reject this description of himself: he would proudly accept it. But this being so, it is inevitable that much of his teaching—all the teaching for which he cares most in his heart—must be in our day the voice of one preaching in the wilderness.

He claims to be not merely poet of the beautiful, but missionary of the truth; not so much judge in Art as master in Philosophy. And as such he repudiates modern science, modern machinery, modern politics—in a sense modern civilisation, as we know it and make it. Not merely is it his ideal to get rid of these; but in his own way he sets himself manfully to extirpate these things in practice from the visible life of himself and of those who surround him. Such heroic impossibilities recoil on his own head. The nineteenth

century has been too strong for him. Iron, steam, science, democracy have thrust him aside, and have left him in his old age little but a solitary and most pathetic Prophet, such as a John the Baptist by Mantegna, unbending, undismayed, still crying out to a scanty band around him—"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

I am one who believes most devoutly in the need of repentance, and in the ultimate, if not early, advent of a kingdom of the Beautiful and the Good. But like the world around me, I hold by the nineteenth century and not by the thirteenth; or rather I trust that some Century to come may find means of reconciling the ages of Steam and the ages of Faith, of combining the best of all ages in one. Unluckily, as do other prophets, as do most mystics, John Ruskin will have undivided allegiance. With him, it is ever—all or none. Accept him and his lesson—wholly, absolutely, without murmur or doubt—or he will have none of your homage. And the consequence is that his devotees have been neither many nor impressive. His genius, as most men admit, will carry him at times into fabulous extravagances, and his exquisite tenderness of soul will oftentimes seem to be but a second childhood in the eyes of the world. Thus it has come to pass that the grotesque side of this noble Evangel of his has been perpetually thrust into the forefront of the fight; and those who have professed to expound the Gospel of Ruskin have been for the most part such lads and lasses as the world in its grossness regards with impatience, and turns from with a smile.

As one of the oldest and most fervent believers in

his genius and the noble uses to which he has devoted it, I long to say a word or two in support of my belief : not that I have the shadow of a claim to speak as his disciple, to defend his utterances, or to represent his thoughts. In one sense, no doubt, I stand at an opposite pole of ideas, and in literal and direct words, I could hardly adopt any one of the leading doctrines of his creed. As to mine, he probably rejects everything I hold sacred and true with violent indignation and scorn. Morally, spiritually, as seen through a glass darkly, I believe that his teachers and my teachers are essentially one, and may yet be combined in the greater harmony that is to be. But to all this I should despair of inducing him to agree, or even to listen with patience. He regards me, I fear, as an utterly lost soul, destined to nothing but evil in this world and the next. And did he not once long ago, in private communication and in public excommunication, consign me to outer darkness, and cover with indignant scorn every man and every thing in which I have put my trust ?

The world has long been of one mind, I have said, as to the beauty of Ruskin's writing ; but I venture to think that even yet full justice has not been rendered to his consummate mastery over our English tongue : that it has not been put high enough, and some of its unique qualities have not been perceived. Now I hold that in certain qualities, in given ways, and in some rarer passages of his, Ruskin not only surpasses every contemporary writer of prose (which indeed is obvious enough), but he calls out of our glorious English tongue notes more strangely beautiful and

inspiring than any ever yet issued from that instrument. No writer of prose before or since has ever rolled forth such mighty fantasias, or reached such pathetic melodies in words, or composed long books in one sustained strain of limpid grace.

It is indeed very far from a perfect style : much less is it in any sense a model style, or one to be cultivated, studied, or followed. If any young aspirant were to think it could be imitated, better were a millstone hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea. No man can bend the bow of Ulysses ; and if he dared to take down from its long rest the terrible weapon, such an one might give himself an ugly wound. Ulysses himself has shot with it wildly, madly, with preposterous overflying of the mark, and blind aiming at the wrong target. Ruskin, be it said in sorrow, has too often played unseemly pranks on his great instrument : is too often ' in excess,' as the Ethics put it, indeed he is usually ' in excess ' ; he has used his mastery in mere exultation in his own mastery ; and, as he now knows himself, he has used it out of wantonness—rarely, but very rarely, as in *The Seven Lamps*, in a spirit of display, or with reckless defiance of sense, good taste, reserve of strength—yet never with affectation, never as a tradesman, as a hack.

We need not enter here on the interminable debate about what is called ' poetic prose,' whether poetic prose be a legitimate form of expressing ideas. A good deal of nonsense has been talked about it ; and the whole matter seems too much a dispute about terms. If prose be ornate with flowers of speech inappropriate to the idea expressed, or studiously

affected, or obtrusively luscious—it is bad prose. If the language be proper to verse but improper to prose—it is bad prose. If the cadences begin to be obvious, if they tend to be actually scanned as verses, if the images are remote, lyrical, piled over one another, needlessly complicated, if the passage has to be read twice before we grasp its meaning—then it is bad prose. On the other hand, all ideas are capable of being expressed in prose, as well as in verse. They may be clothed with as much grace as is consistent with precision. If the sense be absolutely clear, the flow of words perfectly easy, the language in complete harmony with the thought, then no beauty in the phraseology can be misplaced—provided that this beauty be held in reserve, is to be unconsciously felt, not obviously thrust forward, and is always the beauty of prose, and not the beauty of verse.

It cannot be denied that Ruskin, especially in his earlier works, is too often obtrusively luscious, that his images are often lyrical, set in too profuse and gorgeous a mosaic. Be it so. But he is always perfectly, transparently clear, absolutely free from affected euphuism, never laboriously 'precious,' never grotesque, never eccentric. His besetting sins as a master of speech may be summed up in his passion for profuse imagery, and delight in an almost audible melody of words. But how different is this from the laborious affectation of what is justly condemned as the 'poetic prose' of a writer who tries to be fine, seeking to perform feats of composition, who flogs himself into a bastard sort of poetry, not because he enjoys it, but to impose upon an ignorant reader! This Ruskin

never does. When he bursts the bounds of fine taste, and pelts us with perfumed flowers till we almost faint under their odour and their blaze of colour, it is because he is himself intoxicated with the joy of his blossoming thoughts, and would force some of his divine afflatus into our souls. The priestess of the Delphic god never spoke without inspiration, and then did not use the flat speech of daily life. Would that none ever spoke in books, until they felt the god working in their heart.

To be just, we should remember that a very large part of all that Ruskin treats concerns some scene of beauty, some work of fine art, some earnest moral exhortation, some indignant rebuke to meanness—wherein passionate delight and passionate appeal are not merely lawful, but are of the essence of the lesson. Ruskin is almost always in an ecstasy of admiration, or in a fervour of sympathy, or in a grand burst of prophetic warning. It is his mission, his nature, his happiness so to be. And it is inevitable that such passion and eagerness should be clothed in language more remote from the language of conversation than is that of Swift or Hume. The language of the preacher is not, nor ought it to be, the language of the critic, the philosopher, the historian. Ruskin is a preacher : right or wrong he has to deliver his message, whether men will stay to hear it or not ; and we can no more require him to limit his pace to the plain foot-plodding of unimpassioned prose than we can ask this of Saint Bernard or of Bossuet, of Jeremy Taylor or Thomas Carlyle.

Besides all this, Ruskin has shown that, where the

business in hand is simple instruction, philosophical argument, or mechanical exposition, he is master of an English style of faultless ease, simplicity, and point. When he wants to describe a plain thing, a particular instrument for drawing, a habit of Turner's work, the exact form of a boat, or a tower, or a shell, no one can surpass him, or equal him, in the clearness and precision of his words. His little book on the *Elements of Drawing* is a masterpiece in lucid explanation of simple mechanical rules and practices. *Præterita*, *Fors Clavigera*, and the recent notes to reprinted works, contain easy bits of narration, of banter, of personal humour, that Swift, Defoe, Goldsmith, and Lamb might envy. Turn to that much-abused book, *Unto this Last*—the central book of his life, as it is the turning-point of his career—it is almost wholly free from every fault of excess with which he has been charged. Men may differ as to the argument. But no capable critic will doubt that as a type of philosophical discussion, its form is as fine and as pure as the form of Berkeley or of Hume.

But when, his whole soul aglow with some scene of beauty, transfigured by a profound moral emotion, he breaks forth into one of those typical descants of his, our judgment may still doubt if the colouring be not over-charged and the composition too crowded for perfect art, but we are carried away by its beauty, its rhythm, its pathos. We know that the sentence is too long, preposterously, impossibly sustained—200 words and more—250, nay, 280 words without a single pause—each sentence with 40, 50, 60 commas, colons, and semi-colons—and yet the whole symphony flows on

with such just modulation, the images melt so naturally into each other, the harmony of tone and the ease of words are so complete, that we hasten through the passage in a rapture of admiration. Milton often began, and at times completed, such a resounding voluntary on his glorious organ. But neither Milton, nor Browne, nor Jeremy Taylor was quite master of the mighty instrument. Ruskin, who comes after two centuries of further and continuous progress in this art, is master of the subtle instrument of prose. And though it be true that too often, in wanton defiance of calm judgment, he will fling to the winds his self-control, he has achieved in this rare and perilous art some amazing triumphs of mastery over language, such as the whole history of our literature cannot match.

Lovers of Ruskin (that is, all who read good English books) can recall, and many of them can repeat, hundreds of such passages, and they will grumble at an attempt to select any passage at all. But to make my meaning clear, I will turn to one or two very famous bits, not at all asserting that they are the most truly noble passages that Ruskin ever wrote, but as specimens of his more lyrical mood. He has himself spoken with slight of much of his earlier writing—often perhaps with undeserved humility. He especially regrets the *purpurei panni*, as he calls them, of *The Seven Lamps* and cognate pieces. I will not quote any of these *purpurei panni*, though I think that as *rhetorical prose* English literature has nothing to compare with them. But they *are* rhetorical, somewhat artificial, manifest displays of eloquence; and



we shall all agree that eloquent displays of rhetoric are not the best specimens of prose composition.

I take first a well-known piece of an early book (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. chap. i., 1856), the old Tower of Calais Church, a piece which has haunted my memory for nearly forty years—

“The large neglect, the noble unsightliness of it; the record of its years written so visibly, yet without sign of weakness or decay; its stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea grasses; its slates and tiles all shaken and rent, and yet not falling; its desert of brickwork full of bolts, and holes, and ugly fissures, and yet strong, like a bare brown rock; its carelessness of what any one thinks or feels about it, putting forth no claim, having no beauty nor desirableness, pride, nor grace; yet neither asking for pity; not, as ruins are, useless and piteous, feebly or fondly garrulous of better days; but useful still, going through its own daily work,—as some old fisherman, beaten grey by storm, yet drawing his daily nets; so it stands, with no complaint about its past youth, in blanched and meagre massiveness and serviceableness, gathering human souls together underneath it; the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents; and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea, principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore,—the lighthouse for life, and the belfry for labour, and this for patience and praise.”

I should like to take this passage as a text to point to a quality of Ruskin's prose in which, I believe, he has surpassed all other writers. It is the quality of musical *assonance*. There is plenty of *alliteration* in Ruskin, as there is in all fine writers; but the musical

harmony of sound in Ruskin's happiest efforts is something very different from *alliteration*, and much more subtle. Coarse, obtrusive, artificial *alliteration*, *i.e.* the recurrence of words with the same initial letter, becomes, when crudely treated or overdone, a gross and irritating form of affectation. But the prejudice against alliteration may be carried too far. Alliteration is the natural expression of earnest feeling in every form—it is a physiological result of passion and impetuosity; it becomes a defect when it is repeated too often, or in an obtrusive way, or when it becomes artificial and studied. Whilst alliteration is spontaneous, implicit not explicit, felt not seen, the natural working of a fine ear, it is not only a legitimate expedient both of prose and of verse, but is an indispensable accessory of the higher harmonies, whether of verse or prose.

Ruskin uses alliteration much (it must be admitted, in profusion), but he relies on a far subtler resource of harmony—that is *assonance*, or as I should prefer to name it, *consonance*. I have never seen this quality treated at all systematically, but I am convinced that it is at the basis of all fine cadences both in verse and in prose. By *consonance* I mean *the recurrence of the same, or of cognate, sounds*, not merely in the first letter of words, but where the stress comes, in any part of a word, and that in sounds whether vowel or consonant. Grimm's law of interchangeable consonants applies; and all the well-known groupings of consonants may be noted. The liquids connote the sweeter, the gutturals the sterner ideas; the sibilants connect and organise the words. Of poets, perhaps Milton, Shelley, and Tennyson make the fullest use of this resource.

We need not suppose that it is consciously sought, or in any sense studied, or even observed by the poet. But *consonance*, *i.e.* recurrence of the same or kindred sounds, is very visible when we look for it in a beautiful cadence. 'Take Tennyson's—

“ Old Yew, which graspest at the stones  
That name the under-lying dead,  
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,  
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.”

How much does the music, nay the impressiveness, of this stanza depend on *consonance*! The great booming **O** with which it opens, is repeated in the last word of the first and also the last line. The cruel word 'graspest' is repeated in part in the harsh word 'stones.' Three lines, and six words in all, begin with the soft 'th': 'name' is echoed by 'net,' 'underlying' by 'dreamless'; the 'r' of 'roots' is heard again in 'wrapt,' the 'b' in 'fibres,' in 'about,' and 'bones.' These are not all accidental cases of *consonance*.

This musical *consonance* is quite present in fine prose, although many powerful writers seem to have had but little ear for its effects. Such men as Swift, Defoe, Gibbon, Macaulay seldom advance beyond alliteration in the ordinary sense. But true *consonance*, or musical correspondence of note, is very perceptible in the prose of Milton, of Sir Thomas Browne, of Burke, of Coleridge, of De Quincey. Above all, it is especially marked in our English Bible, and in the Collects and grander canticles of the Prayer Book; and is the source of much of their power over us. Of all the masters of prose literature, John Ruskin has made the

finest use of this resource, and with the most delicate and mysterious power. And this is no doubt due to his mind being saturated from childhood with the harmonies of our English Bible, and to his speaking to us with religious solemnity and in Biblical tones.

This piece about the tower of Calais Church is full of this beautiful and subtle form of alliteration or colliteration: "the large **n**eglect, the **n**oble unsightliness of it"—"the **r**ecord of its **y**ears **w**ritten so visibly, yet **w**ithout sign of **w**eakness or **d**ecay"—"the **s**ound of its bells for prayer **s**till **r**olling through its rents." Here in a single line are three liquid double 'll'; there are six 's'; there are five 'r' in seven words—"sound **r**olling through rents" is finely expressive of a peal of bells. And the passage ends with a triple alliteration, the second of the three being inverted: 'bel' echoing to 'lab'—"the lighthouse for life, and the **b**elfry for **l**abour, and this—for **p**atience and **p**raise."

Turn to another famous passage (*Modern Painters*, vol. iv. chap. xix.), a somewhat over-wrought, possibly unjust picture, but a wonderful piece of imaginative description. It is the account of the peasants of the Valais, in the grand chapter on 'Mountain Gloom'—

"They do not understand so much as the name of beauty, or of knowledge. They understand dimly that of virtue. Love, patience, hospitality, faith,—these things they know. To glean their meadows side by side, so happier; to bear the burden up the breathless mountain flank, unmurmuringly; to bid the stranger drink from their vessel of milk; to see at the foot of their low death-beds a pale figure upon a cross, dying also, patiently; in this they are different from the cattle and from the

stones ; but, in all this unrewarded so far as concerns the present life. For them, there is neither hope nor passion of spirit ; for them, neither advance nor exultation. Black breau, rude roof, dark night, laborious day, weary arm at sunset ; and life ebbs away. No books, no thoughts, no attainments, no rest ; except only sometimes a little sitting in the sun under the church wall, as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air ; a pattering of a few prayers, not understood, by the altar-rails of the dimly gilded chapel, and so, back to the sombre home, with the cloud upon them still unbroken—that cloud of rocky gloom, born out of the wild torrents and ruinous stones, and unlightened even in their religion, except by the vague promise of some better things unknown, mingled with threatening, and obscured by an unspeakable horror,—a smoke, as it were, of martyrdom, coiling up with the incense ; and amidst the images of tortured bodies and lamenting spirits in hurtling flames, the very cross, for them, dashed more deeply than for others with gouts of blood."

The piece is over-wrought as well as unjust, with somewhat false emphasis, but how splendid in colour and majestic in language ! "To bear the burden up the breathless mountain flank un murmuringly"—is fine in spite of its obvious scansion and its profuse alliteration. "At their low death-beds a pale figure upon a cross, dying also, patiently"—will not scan, and it is charged with solemnity by soft 'l,' 'd,' and 'p,' repeated. How beautifully imitative is the line, "*as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air*"—a, e, i, o, u—with ten monosyllables and one dissyllable ! "*The crōss dashed more deeply with gōuts of blōod."* No one who has ever read that passage can pass along the

Catholic valleys of the Swiss Alps without having it in his mind. Overcharged, and somewhat consciously and designedly *pictorial*, as it is, it is a truly wonderful example of mastery over language and sympathetic insight.

We may turn now to a passage or two, in which perhaps Ruskin is quite at his best. He has written few things finer, and indeed more exactly truthful, than his picture of the Campagna of Rome. This is in the Preface to the second edition of *Modern Painters*, 1843—

“ Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for the moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep. Scattered blocks of black stone, four-square remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like dying fire on defiled altars; the blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the p'ain

to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave."

Here is a piece of pure description without passion or moralising ; the passage is broken, as we find in all good modern prose, into sentences of forty or fifty words. It is absolutely clear, literally true, an imaginative picture of one of the most impressive scenes in the world. All who know it remember "the white, hollow, carious earth," like bone dust, "the long knotted grass," the "banks of ruin" and "hillocks of mouldering earth," the "dull purple poisonous haze," "the shattered aqueducts," like shadowy mourners at a nation's grave. The whole piece may be set beside Shelley's poem from the *Euganean Hills*, and it produces a kindred impression. In Ruskin's prose, perhaps for the first time in literature, there are met the eye of the landscape painter and the voice of the lyric poet—and both are blended in perfection. It seems to me idle to debate, whether or not it is legitimate to describe in prose a magnificent scene, whether it be lawful to set down in prose the ideas which this scene kindles in an imaginative soul, whether it be permitted to such an artist to resort to any resource of grace or power which the English language can present.

I turn now to a little book of his written in the middle of his life, at the height of his power, just before he entered on his second career of social philosopher and new evangelist. *The Harbours of England* was published more than forty years ago in 1856 (*ætat.* 37), and it has been happily reprinted in a

cheap and smaller form, 1895. It is, I believe, as an education in art, as true and as masterly as anything Ruskin ever wrote. But I wish now to treat it only from the point of view of English literature. And I make bold to say that no book in our language shows more varied resources over prose-writing, or an English more pure, more vigorous, more enchanting. It contains hardly any of those tirades with which the preacher loves to drench his hearers—torrents from the fountains of his ecstasy, or his indignation. The book is full of enthusiasm and of poetry; but it also contains a body of critical and expository matter—simple, lucid, graceful, incisive as anything ever set down by the hand of John Ruskin, or indeed of any other master of our English prose.

Every one remembers the striking sentence with which it opens—a sentence, it may be, exaggerated in meaning, but how melodious, how impressive—“Of all things, living or lifeless [note the five *l*, the four *i*, in the first six words], upon this strange earth, there is but one which, having reached the mid-term of appointed human endurance on it, I still regard with unmitigated amazement.” This object is the bow of a Boat—“the blunt head of a common, bluff, undecked sea-boat lying aside in its furrow of beach sand. . . .”

“The sum of Navigation is in that. You may magnify it or decorate it as you will: you will not add to the wonder of it. Lengthen it into hatchet-like edge of iron,—strengthen it with complex tracery of ribs of oak,—carve it and gild it till a column of light moves beneath it on the sea,—you have made no more of it than it was



at first. That rude simplicity of bent plank, that [*should be 'which'*] can breast its way through the death that is in the deep sea, has in it the soul of shipping. Beyond this, we may have more work, more men, more money ; we cannot have more miracle.”

The whole passage is loaded with imagery, with fancy, but hardly with conceits ; it is wonderfully ingenious, impressive, suggestive, so that a boat is never quite the same thing to any one who has read this passage in early life. The ever-changing curves of the boat recall “the image of a sea-shell.” “Every plank is a Fate, and has men’s lives wreathed in the knots of it.” This bow of the boat is “the gift of another world.” Without it, we should be “chained to our rocks.” The very nails that fasten the planks are “the rivets of the fellowship of the world.” “Their iron does more than draw lightning out of heaven, it leads love round the earth.” It is possible to call this fantastic, over-wrought, lyrical : it is not possible to dispute its beauty, charm, and enthusiasm. It seems to me to carry imaginative prose exactly to that limit which to pass would cease to be fitting in prose ; to carry fancy to the very verge of that which, if less sincere, less true, less pathetic, would justly be regarded as Euphuistic conceit.

And so this splendid hymn to the sea-boat rolls on to that piece which I take to be as fine and as true as anything ever said about the sea, even by our sea-poets, Byron or Shelley—

“Then also, it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the enemy that it does battle with. To lift dead weight ; to overcome length of languid space ; to multiply or

systematise a given force ; this we may see done by the bar, or beam, or wheel, without wonder. But to war with the living fury of waters, to bare its breast, moment after moment, against the unwearied enmity of ocean,—the subtle, fitful, implacable smiting of the black waves, provoking each other on, endlessly, all the infinite march of the Atlantic rolling on behind them to their help, and still to strike them back into a wreath of smoke and futile foam, and win its way against them, and keep its charge of life from them ;—does any other soulless thing do as much as this ?”

This noble paragraph has truth, originality, music, majesty, with that imitative power of sound which is usually thought to be possible only in poetry, and is very rarely successful even in poetry. Homer has often caught echoes of the sea in his majestic hexameters ; Byron and Shelley occasionally recall it ; as does Tennyson in its milder moods and calm rest. But I know no other English prose but this which, literally and nobly describing the look of a wild sea, suggests in the very rhythm of its cadence, and in the music of its roar, the tumultuous surging of the surf —“ to war with the living fury of waters ”—“ the subtle, fitful, implacable smiting of the black waves ” —“ still to strike them back into a wreath of smoke and futile foam, and win its way against them.” Here we seem not only to see before our eyes, but to hear with our ears, the crash of a stout boat plunging through a choppy sea off our southern coasts.

I would take this paragraph as the high-water mark of Ruskin’s prose method. But there are scores and hundreds of passages in his books of equal power and

perfection. This book on *The Harbours of England* is full of them. *O si sic omnia!* Alas! a few pages further on even of this admirable book, which is so free from them, comes one of those ungovernable, overladen, hypertrophied outbursts of his, which so much deform his earlier books. It is a splendid piece of conception: each phrase, each sentence is beautiful; the images are appropriate and cognate, they flow naturally out of each other; and the whole has a most harmonious glow. But alas! as English prose, it is *impossible*. It has 255 words without a pause, and 26 intermediate signs of punctuation. No human breath could utter such a sentence: even the eye is bewildered; and, at last, the most docile and attentive reader sinks back, stunned and puzzled by such a torrent of phrases and such a wilderness of thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

He is speaking of the fisher-boat as the most venerable kind of ship. He stands musing on the shingle between the black sides of two stranded fishing-boats. He watches "the clear heavy water-edge of ocean rising and falling close to their bows." And then he turns to the boats.

"And the dark flanks of the fishing-boats all aslope above, in their shining quietness, hot in the morning sun, rusty and seamed, with square patches of plank nailed over their rents; just rough enough to let the little flat-footed fisher-children haul or twist themselves up to the

<sup>1</sup> In the second volume of *Modern Painters*, p. 132, may be found a mammoth sentence, I suppose the most gigantic sentence in English prose. It has 619 words without a full stop, and 80 intermediate signs of punctuation, together with four clauses in brackets. It has been reprinted in the revised two-volume edition of 1883, where it fills four whole pages, i. 347-351.

gunwales, and drop back again along some stray rope ; just round enough to remind us, in their broad and gradual curves, of the sweep of the green surges they know so well, and of the hours when those old sides of seared timber, all ashine with the sea, plunge and dip into the deep green purity of the mounded waves more joyfully than a deer lies down among the grass of Spring, the soft white cloud of foam opening momentarily at the bows, and fading or flying high into the breeze where the sea-gulls toss and shriek,—the joy and beauty of it, all the while, so mingled with the sense of unfathomable danger, and the human effort and sorrow going on perpetually from age to age, waves rolling for ever, and winds moaning for ever, and faithful hearts trusting and sickening for ever, and brave lives dashed away about the rattling beach like weeds for ever ; and still at the helm of every lonely boat, through starless night and hopeless dawn, His hand, who spread the fisher's net over the dust of the Sidonian palaces, and gave into the fisher's hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

It is a grand passage, ruined, I think, by excess of eagerness and sympathetic passion. Neither Shelley nor Keats ever flung his soul more keenly into an inert object and made it live to us, or rather lived in it, felt its heart beat in his, and made his own its sorrows, its battles, its pride. So Tennyson, gazing on the Yew which covers the loved grave, cries out—

" I seem to fail from out my blood  
And grow incorporate into thee."

So the poet sees the ship that brings his lost Arthur home, hears the noise about the keel, and the bell struck in the night. Thus Ruskin, watching the fisher-

man's boat upon the beach, sees in his mind's eye the past and the future of the boat, the swell of the green billows, and the roar of the ocean, and still at the helm, unseen but of him, an Almighty Hand guiding it in life and in death.

Had this noble vision been rehearsed with less passion, and in sober intervals of breathing, we could have borne it. The first twelve or fourteen lines, ending with "the deep green purity of the mounded waves," form a full picture. But, like a runaway horse, our poet plunges on where no human lungs and no ordinary brain can keep up the giddy pace; and for seven or eight lines more we are pelted with new images till we feel like landsmen caught in a sudden squall. And then how grand are the last ten lines—"the human effort and sorrow going on perpetually from age to age—!" down to that daring antithesis of the fisherman of Tyre and the fisherman of St. Peter's! I cannot call it a conceit; but it would have been a conceit in the hands of any one less sincere, less passionate, not so perfectly saturated with Biblical imagery and language.

I have dwelt upon this passage as a typical example of Ruskin's magnificent power over the literary instrument, of his intense sympathy, of his vivid imagination, and alas! also of his ungovernable flux of ideas and of words. It is by reason of this wilful megalomania and plethoric habit, that we must hesitate to pronounce him the greatest master of English prose in our whole literature; but it is such mastery over language, such power to triumph over almost impossible conditions and difficulties, that compel us to regard him

as one who could have become the noblest master of prose ever recorded, if he would only have set himself to curb his Pegasus from the first, and systematically to think of his reader's capacity for taking in, as well as of his own capacity for pouring forth, a torrent of glowing thoughts.

As a matter of fact, John Ruskin himself undertook to curb his Pegasus, and, like Turner or Beethoven, distinctly formed and practised 'a second manner.' That second manner coincides with the great change in his career, when he passed from critic of art to be social reformer and moral philosopher. The change was of course not absolute ; but whereas, in the earlier half of his life, he had been a writer about Beauty and Art, who wove into his teaching lessons on social, moral, and religious problems, so he became, in the later part of his life, a worker about Society and Ethics, who filled his practical teaching with judgments about the beautiful in Nature and in Art. That second career dates from about the year 1860, when he began to write *Unto this Last*, which was finally published in 1862.

I myself judge that book to be not only the most original and creative work of John Ruskin, but the most original and creative work in pure literature since *Sartor Resartus*. But I am now concerning myself with form ; and, as a matter of form, I would point to it as a work containing almost all that is noble in Ruskin's written prose, with hardly any, or very few, of his excesses and mannerisms. It is true that, p. 147-8, we have a single sentence of 242 words and 52 intermediate stops before we come to the pause. But this

is occasional ; and the book as a whole is a masterpiece of pure, incisive, imaginative, lucid English. If one had to plead the cause of Ruskin before the Supreme Court in the Republic of Letters, one would rely on that book as a type of clearness, wit, eloquence, versatility, passion.

From the publication of *Unto this Last*, in 1862, John Ruskin distinctly adopted his later manner. Two volumes of selections from Ruskin's works were published in 1893 by George Allen, the compilation of some anonymous editor. They are of nearly equal size and of periods of equal length. The first series consists of extracts between 1843 and 1860 from *Modern Painters*, *Seven Lamps*, *Stones of Venice*, and minor lectures, articles and letters anterior to 1860. The second series, 1860-1888, contains selections from *Unto this Last*, *Fors*, *Præterita*, and the lectures and treatises subsequent to 1860. Now, it will be seen that in the second series the style is more measured, more mature, more practical, more simple. It is rare to find the *purpurei panni* which abound in the first series, or the sentences of 200 words, or the ostentatious piling up of luscious imagery and tumultuous fugues in oral symphony. The 'first state' of a plate by Ruskin has far richer effects and more vivid light and shade than any example of his 'second state.'

Alas ! the change came too late—too late in his life, too late in his career. When *Unto this Last* was finally published, John Ruskin was forty-three : he had already written the most elaborate and systematic of all his books—those on which his world-wide fame

still rests. He had long passed *il mezzo del cammi-r di nostra vita*—and even the middle of his own long life ; his energy, his health, his hopes were not what they had been in the glorious youth and early manhood : his mission became consciously to raise men's moral standard in life, not to raise their sense of the beautiful in Art. The old mariner still held us with his glittering eye, and forced us to listen to his wondrous tale, but he spoke like a man whose voice shook with the memory of all that he had seen and known, over whom the deep waters had passed. I am one of those who know that John Ruskin has told us in his second life things more true, and more important even, than he told us in his first life. But yet I cannot bring myself to hold that, as magician of words, his later teaching has the mystery and the glory which hung round the honeyed lips of the 'Oxford graduate.'

If, then, John Ruskin be not in actual achievement the greatest master who ever wrote in English prose, it is only because he refused to chasten his passion and his imagination until the prime of life was past. A graceful poet and a great moralist said—

“ Prune thou thy words ; the thoughts control  
That o'er thee swell and throng :—  
They will condense within thy soul,  
And change to purpose strong.”

This lesson Ruskin never learned until he was growing grey, and even now he only observes it so long as the spirit moves him, or rather does not move him too keenly. He has rarely suffered his thoughts to condense within his soul. Far from controlling them, he has spurred and lashed them into fury, so that they



swell and throng over him and his readers, too often changing into satiety and impotence. Every other faculty of a great master of speech, except reserve, husbanding of resources, and patience, he possesses in measure most abundant—lucidity, purity, brilliance, elasticity, wit, fire, passion, imagination, majesty, with a mastery over all the melody of cadence that has no rival in the whole range of English literature.

## TENNYSON

(1899)

ONCE only in the history of our literature in verse, and once in prose, has there been seen a royal suzerainty, maintained over an entire epoch by a single writer, to be compared to that by which Alfred Tennyson has dominated Victorian poetry. The supremacy held by Alexander Pope over his immediate contemporaries and that held by Samuel Johnson over his, were as great and far more autocratic. But in the half-century that has passed since Tennyson became Poet Laureate, his authority over poetic form has been paramount, as his superiority to all poets of the time is above question or doubt. His flower, to adopt his words of proud humility, has truly "worn a crown of light." Most writers of verse can raise the flowers now. They sow it far and wide by every town and tower. All have the seed from Alfred Tennyson. But the cynic who should call it a weed would be flayed alive, as was Marsyas by Apollo. The people, the critics, the poets with one voice continue to cry, "Splendid is the flower!" And so say we all.

He has never been judged as we judge Byron, Shelley, Keats, or Wordsworth. Since he won his just place as the poet of the Victorian era, he has not

been treated as mere poet, or citizen of the immortal Republic of Letters. He has been, like 'Mr. Pope' or 'The Doctor,' invested with a conventional autocracy, and is spoken of in language of homage, under pain of some form of *lèse-majesté*. It is far too early to anticipate the judgment of our successors on the place of Tennyson in English poetry. It is not too early to speak of him with freedom and honest admiration, disdaining any spurious loyalty and the whispered humbleness which royal personages expect. To continue this still would be false homage to our glorious literature and to one of the finest poets who adorn its roll.

As Homer was for all Greece *the poet*, so for the second half of the nineteenth century Tennyson has been 'the Poet'—his devotees spoke of him as 'the Bard'—holding a place quite analogous to that of Hugo in France; for he and Victor both "darkened the wreaths of all who claimed to be their peers" in England as in France. No one denies that in England, as in France, there were men of genius who have written admirable verse. All men of sense feel the original genius of Robert Browning, his unique gift, his subtle power. All men of taste feel the magic of Swinburne's luscious music, his thrill of passion and scorn. One need not go through the list of the sixty-two so-called 'minor poets,'—"some are pretty enough and some are poor indeed!" Yes! but the cool judgment brings us back to this, that though one or two men in these fifty years past have given us poems of resplendent genius, and some scores have written verses of extreme felicity and grace, and many

hundreds of men and women have composed pieces 'pretty enough,' the prevalent perfume is always that of the Tennysonian flower; the lyre, whoever strikes it, gives forth the Tennysonian love-note of its own motion, and Alfred Tennyson holds an indisputable laureate crown as completely as ever did Victor Hugo in France.

The crown has been won, partly by the fact that Tennyson embalmed in exquisite verses the current tastes, creeds, hopes, and sympathies of the larger part of the reading public in our age, but mainly it was won by the supreme perfection of his form. In early life he formed a poetic style of his own, of quite faultless precision—musical, simple, and lucid. And in sixty years of poetic fecundity, his style may have gained in energy, but not in precision. It was never careless, never uncouth, never (or rarely) obscure. Every line was polished with the same unerring ear and the same infallible taste. In some sixty thousand lines it is rare to find a really false rhyme, a truly bungling verse, a crude confusion of epithets, or a vile cacophony—such ragged stuff as Byron flung off on almost every other page, such redundancies as Shelley or Keats would pour forth in some hour of delirious rapture, such rank commonplaces as too often offend us in Wordsworth, even when he is not droning of malice prepense. Verses so uniformly harmonious as those of Tennyson, with their witchery of words, yet so clear, so pure, so tender, so redolent of what is beautiful in nature, in man, in woman—all this won over the entire public that cares for poetry, and truly deserved to win it.

Even now full justice has hardly been done to Tennyson's supremacy in form ; or rather, the general reader, much as he loves his poems, is not quite aware of the infallible mastery of language they possess. In the whole range of English poetry, Milton alone can be held to show an equal or even greater uniformity of polish. Perfection and continuity of polish are certainly not the same thing as the highest poetry, but they are the note of the consummate artist. English poetry, for all its splendid achievements, is not remarkable for uniform perfection of form, as compared with the best poetry of Greece, of Rome, and of Italy. Shakespeare himself (or perhaps it is his editors, his printers, or his pseudonyms), will at times break out into rant, and he is inordinately prone to indulge in conceits and quips. Nearly all our poets have their bad days—become careless, reckless, or prosy ; lose complete self-control ; or commit some error of taste, be it in haste, in passion, or some morbid condition of the creative fancy. Gray always writes like the scholar and critic that he was, and Pope always writes with the neatness of a French ' wit.' But neither can uniformly avoid the commonplace, and thus they cannot claim the crown of absolute poetic form. Milton, if we can forgive the prolixity of his old age, never descends in his eagle's flight from the lofty perfection of form. And more than all other poets, Tennyson, if he never soars to such heights as Milton, maintains this wonderful equality of measured beat.

This unfaltering truth, of form reaches its zenith in *In Memoriam*, which must always remain one of the triumphs of English poetry. It would be difficult to

name any other poem of such length (some three thousand lines) where the rhythm, phrasing, and articulation are so entirely faultless, so exquisitely clear, melodious, and sure. Subtle arguments of philosophy and problems of faith are treated with a grace equal to the ease and the lucidity of the expression. There is not a poor rhyme, not a forced phrase, not a loose or harsh line in the whole series. The rhymes, the assonances, the winged epithets are often of astonishing brilliancy, and yet they seem to flow unbidden from some native well-spring of poetic speech. Such ease, certainty, and harmony of tone imply consummate mastery of the poet's instrument ; for not a stanza or a line looks as if it had cost the poet any labour at all, and yet every stanza and line looks as if no labour of his could ever make it more perfect. This is indeed a quality only to be found in our best poems, of which Milton has given us the immortal type. And though *In Memoriam* is far from being such glorious poetry as *Lycidas*, it shares with *Lycidas* itself consummate mastery of its own form of poetic language.

One of the main feats of this mastery of form is the extraordinarily beautiful and appropriate metre in which this poem is cast. Tennyson must be considered to have founded the typical metre for this meditative and elegiac lyric. Even if it had been occasionally used before in the seventeenth century, Tennyson gave it the development and perfection it has for us. It has become the natural mode for this reflective and mournful poetry ; it is superior, no doubt, to the metre of Milton's *Il Penseroso*, or that of Marvell's *Thoughts in a Garden*, Byron's *Elegy on Thyrza*, or Coleridge's

*Genevieve.* The ease, force, and music of this quatrain in Tennyson's hands are wonderful—the ease equalling the force, the music equalling the ease. As in all meditative poems on a single theme, we find stanzas which we could well spare. But the pieces which are best known and have become household words, especially the first ten elegies with the famous *Introduction*, are masterpieces of exquisite versification; several of them may stand beside some of the happiest stanzas in our poetry. I always think of the opening stanza in No. ii.—

“ Old Yew, which graspest at the stones  
That name the under-lying dead,  
Thy fibres net the dreamless head;  
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.”—

as being a miracle of poignant music and simple power. And what descriptive rhythm there is in the subtle alliterations and harmonies of the stanza—

“ But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
A use in measured language lies;  
The sad mechanic exercise,  
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.”

What pathos and reticence in the last lines of No. vi.—

“ To her, perpetual maidenhood,  
And unto me, no second friend.”

And the tender address to the ship bearing his friend's body home in No. x.

English poetry again has few stanzas which for calm beauty can compare with—

“ 'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand  
Where he in English earth is laid,  
And from his ashes may be made  
The violet of his native land.” (xviii.)

And the famous stanzas—

“ When Lazarus left his charnel-cave.”            (xxxi.)

“ Oh yet we trust that somehow good ”            (liv.)

and the other stanzas of this philosophic debate.

Or again the stanzas—

“ I past beside the reverend walls  
In which of old I wore the gown.”            (lxxxvii.)

“ You say, but with no touch of scorn.”            (xcvi.)

“ Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky.”            (cvi.)

These are the household words—almost to us to-day the commonplaces of Tennyson. And the public is so far right that these, it may be hackneyed, lines are in grace, simplicity, and music amongst the best masterpieces of English lyric.

A question still remains. With all the charm and pathos of these stanzas, with all that unfailing workmanship surpassed perhaps by Milton alone, does *In Memoriam*, even in form, reach the topmost empyrean of lyric to which one or two of our poets have risen? Memory echoes back to our ear a passionate couplet, it may be, of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, a dazzling gem from *Lycidas*, another from Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, another from Wordsworth's *Ode on Immortality*.

Listen to this—

“ Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising  
Haply I think on thee—and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.”

Or again, we think of Milton's *Nativity*—

“ The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;  
And kings sat still with awful eye.”



or we recall *Lycidas*—

“ He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.”

Does *In Memoriam*, with all its ‘ curious felicity ’ of phrase, its perfect chiselling, its stately music in the minor key—does it touch the rapture and the magic of these unforgotten chords of supreme poetry ? For my own part, I cannot feel that it does, even in such exquisite stanzas as those cited above.

I think again of Shelley’s *West Wind*—

“ O thou  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow  
Her clarion o’er the dreaming earth.”

Here is the Muse of Hellas who inspired the ἑπεα πτερόεντα of Pindar and of Sappho.

And again I think of Wordsworth’s *Ode*—

“ There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.”

and so on down to—

“ To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

It is true that the stanzas of *In Memoriam* are more ingenious, more delicately chiselled, more subtle in art, than these Wordsworthian truisms ; but they do not

altogether rouse one with such a ring ; they do not ravish the soul and stamp the memory so deeply ; they are not quite so spontaneous, so unaffected, so inimitable ; and therefore I feel that they fail to mount into the topmost air of poetic rapture.

But saying this, we do not diminish the laureate's crown. *In Memoriam* must long remain one of our noblest poems, along with Gray's *Elegy*, also a little academic—a poem, it must be allowed, too long and in places rather too obvious, if not trivial. *In Memoriam* will stand along with Coleridge's *Ode to Love*, Keats' *Ode to Autumn*, Marvell's *Odes and Elegies*—superior perhaps to all of these as it is, but still wanting in that amplest breath of the Delphic God. Indeed, with all its art, melody, and charm, we see from time to time in *In Memoriam* a little too visibly “the sad mechanic exercise,” which is the inevitable result of too rigid and prolonged devotion to the uses of ‘measured language.’ To Chaucer, to Shakespeare, to Spenser—nay, to Shelley and Burns, to Byron and Keats, poetry never could be for an hour a mechanic exercise. They all, like Shelley's *Skylark*, would pour their “full heart in profuse strains of unpremeditated art.”

So far we have been considering the lyrical form of *In Memoriam*—a form which, if never quite reaching in rapture the supreme bursts of lyric, is after Milton's the most faultlessly chiselled verse in our language. We pass to its substance : and we will say at once that in conception it is not equal to its form. Yet in conception it is a noble poem. The account of its origin and its long and gradual construction in detached elegies extending over sixteen years, as explained in

Hallam Tennyson's valuable *Memoir*, fully disposes of the adverse criticisms that were once passed on the scheme of the poem. The sudden death of Arthur Hallam, and his wonderful promise, gifts, influence and so forth, form the occasion, the overture, the *motive* of *In Memoriam*; but these things do not at all form the main substance of the whole. The early death of Edward King was the occasion of *Lycidas*; but we do not hold Milton literally bound to his belief that his young friend had left no peer on earth. Nor do we take every phrase in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* or Byron's *Childe Harold* as absolute autobiography and not poetry.

As the poet himself tells us, *In Memoriam* is a *Divina Commedia*, a meditative poem, wherein thoughts on death, man's destiny, future life, and the purposes of the Creator, gradually lead up to Faith in His goodness, and a sober sense of happiness in Resignation and Love. This makes it a real *Divina Commedia*—a *bona-fide* effort to "assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to men." But then *In Memoriam* is a *Divine Comedy* or a *Paradise Lost*, *longo intervallo*. Putting aside the fact that Tennyson is not a Dante or a Milton, and that his graceful elegies do not pretend to vie with the mighty imagination of these immortal visions, can it be said that either the theology or the philosophy of *In Memoriam* are new, original, with an independent force and depth of their own? Surely not. As the Darwinian and evolutionary theories discussed are not the original discoveries of the poet in natural science, so the theological and metaphysical problems

are not original contributions to theology or philosophy. They are an admirably tuneful versification of ideas current in the religious and learned world.

Together with *In Memoriam*—what was indeed the prelude, almost the first rough sketch of *In Memoriam*, equal to it in metrical skill and also in meditative power—we must take the *Two Voices*. It might well be urged that the *Two Voices*, in the astonishing art with which its most exacting stanza is managed, in the mastery in which a subtle argument is embodied in terse poetic form, in its richness of metaphysical suggestion, forms the greatest triumph of Tennyson's profounder poems. Our language has few finer examples of argumentative verse. But has the argument the stamp of original genius, of new and pregnant thought? Surely not. The ideas are those which have been worked out in a hundred sermons and essays by able men who, feeling the force of many unsolved problems of metaphysics and of science, still would find æsthetic, moral, and psychological grounds for "faintly trusting the larger hope." Nor can it be denied that throughout this poem, as throughout *In Memoriam*—as in all the metaphysical poems—there runs the undertone of scepticism, of absence at any rate of entire mental assurance and solid *belief*, as distinct from *hope*—

"A hidden hope, the voice replied."

"To feel, although no tongue can prove."

"Believing, where we cannot prove."

"We have but faith; we cannot know."

"An infant crying in the night,  
And with no language but a cry."

“ Behind the veil, behind the veil.”

“ There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds ! ”

No one can deny that all this is exquisitely beautiful ; that these eternal problems have never been clad in such inimitable grace. Nor do we doubt that they embody a train of thought very rife in the cultured intellect of our time. And Tennyson, in many thousand lines, has given it a shape supremely typical of nineteenth-century culture. But he caught up, he did not create, the ideas ; and his most melodious transfiguration of this half-sceptical piety does not give him any title as philosophic genius, nor as the living inspiration on the higher problems of our age. He gave it a voice, he did not give it a faith.

Hitherto we have considered Tennyson's religious and philosophical pieces (especially *In Memoriam*, the most perfect of his poems), because his claim to rank as the supreme poet of the nineteenth century must rest on this if on anything. That he is the supreme poet of the Victorian era is too clear for question. The chief poems after *In Memoriam* are the *Idylls of the King*, occupying more than one-fourth of the entire collection of *Poems* ; *The Princess*, filling about one-twelfth of the collected *Works* ; and *Maud*, not half *The Princess* in length. The *Idylls of the King* are the best known and most read of the larger poems, and in some points of view are the most important of all Tennyson's works, inasmuch as they are far the largest, and covered in execution nearly forty years of the poet's life. The twelve books, of over 11,000 lines, are in form an epic ; they display nearly all the

poet's great qualities in turn, except the didactic and the purely lyrical. They are a wonderful monument of sustained and chastened fancy, of noble ideals, and of delicious music.

A volume would not suffice to dilate on all the beauties of the *Idylls*, the romantic halo of chivalry, the glow of colour, the sonorous clang of the battle scenes, the tender pathos of the love scenes, the tragedy of the catastrophe, the final threnody, when "on the mere the wailing died away." A volume would not suffice to expatiate on all these graces; and for every lover of poetry, for every reader of taste, such a volume, or even such an essay, is wholly needless.

A far more difficult task is to class these fascinating poems. To what order of poetry do they belong; do they fulfil all their aim; are they an unqualified success? Clearly the *Idylls* do not form a real epic. There is too much pure fancy, too much sentiment, too much of the drawing-room and the lecture-hall—in a word, it is nearer to a modern romance than to an antique epic. It is poetry, exquisite poetry, but no more an epic than Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* is an epic, or than his *Hellas* is a tragedy. The words in which Shelley describes his purpose in the *Revolt of Islam* curiously fit the *Idylls of the King*. "I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality." That is a perfectly legitimate motive of a poem. And in a

certain degree this is what Tennyson has done in his *Idylls*, making his plot infinitely more real, more intelligible, and more interesting than that of Shelley's *Islam*.

In choosing as his theme a well-known romance, adapting and developing a very grand old prose-poem, Tennyson obtained the great advantage of incidents living, thrilling, and even familiar, and thus avoiding the cloudy symbolism of Shelley's scheme, which makes *Islam* a closed book to the ordinary public. But then Tennyson fell on the other horn of the dilemma, which was the risk of travestying the old romance, so that it became more or less incongruous, unnatural, and impossible. Lovers of exquisite verse and of romantic chivalry, who know nothing either of historic chivalry or of the mediæval romances, do not feel the incongruity; and they form the great majority of the Tennysonian public. We all feel the wonderful skill with which the local colour is maintained, the glamour of antique setting, the tone of mingled chivalry and barbaric rage in the warriors of the Dragon and of the White Horse. But this very realism of painting increases the incongruity of the whole. These Berserker blood-feasts, these eternal jousts and pageants, these murderous conspiracies and feuds, will not assimilate with the Grand Monarque courtliness of King Arthur, the Quixotic heroisms and sublimated amours of Lancelot, the unearthly passion of the love-lorn maid of Astolat. If the whole poem were cast in a purely ideal world, we could accept it as pure fantasy. But it is not quite an ideal world. Therein lies the difficulty. The scene, though not of course

historic, has certain historic suggestions and characters. It is a world far more real than that of Spenser's *Faery Queene*, or Malory's *Morte d' Arthur*, or Coleridge's *Christabel*. So far as concerns the scene, and the external surroundings, the costumes and the landscapes, we feel these to be a plausible field for a chivalric romance—full of fancy and of poetry, no doubt, but still plausible, intelligible, and coherent. Various episodes, combats, and actions take place upon this scene, of a kind consistent with it, and poetically natural to romances of chivalry. Whole books read almost like incidents we might find in Joinville or Froissart done into exquisite poetry.

But then, in the midst of so much realism, the knights from Arthur downwards, talk and act in ways with which we are familiar in modern ethical and psychological novels ; but which are as impossible in real mediæval knights as a Bengal tiger or a Polar bear would be in a drawing-room. The women, from the Queen to Elaine and Enid, behave, not like dames and damsels of mediæval romance, but with the spiritual delicacy and all the soul-bewildering casuistry we study and enjoy in *Hypatia*, *Romola*, *Middlemarch*, or *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. The *Idylls of the King* are an amalgam of mediæval romance and analytical novel. Both mediæval romance and analytical novel may be made full of interest and power. But the attempt to fuse them into one poem is beyond the art of any imagination.

A still greater difficulty beset the poet in his Arthurian epic, in the fact that he does not invent his plot and his characters as Milton, Spenser, and



Shelley do in their dream-worlds ; but he has simply modernised and bowdlerised a noble epic which needs no decoration from us. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is a grand poem itself ; consistent as a whole, intelligible, and natural as a mediæval romance. Crammed with wild incident, as is Malory's epic—with witchcraft, magic and miracle, blood and battle, lust and rape, villainy and treason—knights and dames behave accordingly. They love, fight, slay, rob, joust, and do deeds of 'derring-do,' and of true love, legal or illegal, like hot-blooded men and women in fierce times, before an idea had arisen in the world of "reverencing conscience," of "leading sweet lives," of "keeping down the base in man," "teaching high thought," with "amiable words and courtliness," and so forth. Malory's original *Morte d'Arthur* is plausible as a mediæval romance, with all its devilry and angelry, its infinite transformation scenes and supernaturalisms, its fierce loves and hates, its blood and crime, and with all its fantastic ideals of 'Honour' and of 'Love.' But in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the devils and most of the angels disappear, the supernaturalism shrinks to a few incidents ; there is a good deal of fighting, but the knights are almost too polite to kill each other ; if the ladies do commit *faux pas*, their artifices and compunctions are those of the novel or the stage. And so the whole fierce, lusty epic gets emasculated into a moral lesson, as if it were to be performed in a drawing-room by an academy of young ladies. Mr. Pope translated the *Iliad* into Queen Anne heroics, but happily he did not attempt a paraphrase of it in the manner of the *Rape of the Lock*.

The *Idylls of the King* are a delicious series of poetic tableaux; and would be pure poetry, if we could forget the incongruity of making belted knights with fairy mothers talk modern morality—noble and musical as the morality is—and if we could forget the fierce clang of battle, and all the rude and unholy adventures that Malory rehearsed once for all in his inimitable mother-tongue.

But when the incongruity of his plan and the anomalies of his characters are once frankly admitted, we can all join in acclaiming the splendour of the execution of Tennyson's largest poem. *Elaine, Guinevere*, and the *Passing of Arthur*, in particular, contain poetry as exquisite in picture, in music, in pathos, as any in our language. The speeches of Arthur, of Lancelot, of Pelleas, and of many more, are truly noble, eloquent, and epic in themselves, if we forget for a moment the acts and the other conditions of these heroes in the rest of the poem. The final parting of Arthur and Guinevere, undoubtedly the most dramatic and heroic scene Tennyson ever painted, is a grand conception, if detached from the Round Table story, and if treated simply as a modern (or undated) episode between false wife and magnanimous husband in his agony of shame, wrath, and sorrow.

If the poet had been bidden by some royal task-master to perform the unnatural task of converting episodes from the Arthurian cycle into poems fit for the young person of modern culture, it could not have been accomplished with more consummate beauty and faultless delicacy. And in this connection it is

significant that the better judgment gives the chief crown of poetry in the whole collection to the original *Morte d'Arthur*, beginning—

“ So all day long the noise of battle rolled,”  
and ending—

“ And on the mere the wailing died away.”

These noble lines, the most perfect in form and the simplest in conception of the *Idylls*, were written in early youth, and are an amazing triumph of precocious art. In them we have an ideal of mystical kinghood and a world of pure fancy, wonder, and weird myth, undisturbed by any incongruous tale of Arthur's blindness and Guinevere's falseness. One used to hear it said at Oxford in the fifties, that if the *Morte d'Arthur* of the early *Poems* was ever completed, it would be the grandest epic in our language. Alas ! this was not to be fulfilled. It still remains the only fragment of real epic in the *Idylls*; the only fragment, because simple, unalloyed with incongruous plot, untainted with modern romance, without ethical or psychological subtleties and graces.

As *In Memoriam* is certainly the most perfect of Tennyson's longer poems, and as the *Idylls of the King* form the most important part of his work, by the scale, variety, and elaboration of the whole series, so we must count *The Princess* and *Maud* as his most characteristic and typical achievements. *The Princess* was published in 1847, when the poet was thirty-eight; *Maud* in 1855, when he was forty-six. In *The Princess* Tennyson chose a subject in which all his genius found full play, which was entirely within all his resources. It was far

lighter in design, much better fitted for his wonderful gifts of sweetness and grace, than the wild legends of the Arthurian cycle. It was no epic—not even an ‘epyll,’ or cross, we may say, between the epic and idyll. It was, as it was entitled, a ‘Medley.’ It was a fantastic idyllic romance, with a gentle undertone of moral purpose, not without a great deal of modern ‘sentiment,’ and some graceful and ladylike banter. Here was a subject which was curiously in harmony with the poet’s temperament and exquisite refinement. He was not called upon to build up an epic, or even an episode in an epic—a thing for which he had (possibly knew that he had) no real mission. But the fantastic romance, cast in an undefined ideal world, and inter-fused with an ethical evangel—an idyll of chivalry told to a bevy of young ladies in a drawing-room, with an eye to their moral improvement—here was a field in which Tennyson had no superior or equal. It may not have been the highest field of a great poet’s aspiration, but, in its own line, the poem is a bewitching success. The result is a piece of unbounded popularity, the charms of which satisfy the most scrupulous criticism as completely as they enthrall the whole reading public.

*Maud* is, in some ways, the most original of all Tennyson’s conceptions. It is the first of those he chose for reading to his friends. It contains the most complex and subtle plot of any of the pieces which he constructed for himself. As an elaborate psychological analysis, he never produced anything on such a scale. The method of its composition—from the catastrophe back to the origin—as it is explained in

the *Memoir*, is very singular and characteristic. The poem certainly contains the poet's most subtle insight into the human heart and brain. It contains also some of his most stirring eloquence, his fiercest passion, and undoubtedly much of his most entrancing melodies. The contrast between the dark mysteries of its opening—"the dreadful hollow," "dabbled with blood-red heath," "the ghastly pit," "the red-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood"—and then the passing to the "Birds in the high Hall-garden," "Go not, happy day," and soon to the miraculous music of "Come into the garden, Maud"—this contrast is profoundly impressive.

But with all the originality of *Maud* as a psychologic study, and all its luscious music, it is not a complete success. We must agree with Ruskin's complaint, amidst all his admiration, that he did not quite like the "sad story" and the "wild kind of versification." The story is more than sad: it is painful, it is ghastly, without being quite tragic. It is never pleasant to hear one recounting the phases of his own mania. And the wildly Bacchantic prosody of the strophes, though often beautiful, and always skilful, produces the effect of a *pot-pourri* in a poem of such length—some 1500 lines. But there is a more serious criticism to be made. The story is a psychologic romance, more fit for prose than for verse. In poetry it is rather too analytic, complex, and introspective for entire enjoyment and ready comprehension. And the romance itself is gruesome and somewhat revolting, as a basis for so much fancy and such delicate melodies. It is slightly incongruous, as if the story of Eugen:

Aram were set to music for the flute. Subtle mysteries of crime and lunacy are endurable in an analytic novel, but do not tell well or even intelligibly in dulcet lyrics. Tens of thousands of men and women imagine themselves to love *Maud* as a poem, with very faint understanding of its mysterious plot and its morbid psychology.

Tennyson hardly ever wrote without a moral purpose of some kind. But his attempt to weave into a ghastly story of crime, avarice, and insanity a fervid hymn to the moral value of national War, was, to say the least, a little irrelevant. It may have been right to denounce the Manchester school of politicians and to glorify the Crimean War as an Ethical Crusade in defence of the 'higher life,' but it prevented many worthy people from doing justice to the beauties of the poem. They would have thought it poisonous rant to preach, that the only way to cure the sin and fraud of great cities was to embark in a big war, were it not that they found this remarkable evangel of the nineteenth century after Christ put into the mouth of a somewhat crazy 'degenerate,' with memories of a blurred and bloody past.

It is a far happier task to turn to the more distinctly lyrical work of Tennyson—that whereon his permanent fame must abide. From the early *Claribel* to the final *Crossing the Bar*, separated by some sixty years of production, Tennyson's pure lyrics stand in the front rank of English lyrical achievement. It is needless to dilate on what every one has admired—man, woman, and child; scholar, simple, critic, or general public. Nor has the praise and delight in this exquisite music

been excessive or mistaken. It is a field where the student of Sappho and Catullus may join hands with the girl in the schoolroom in unbounded admiration. The marvel is that these songs, with their luscious melody, their Æolic chiselling of phrase, their simple completeness, were the work of so young a poet, came forth full-fledged from the egg. That such pieces as *Mariana*, *Oriana*, *Fatima*, the *Merman* and *Mermaid*, should be thrown off by an unknown youth is amazing. That such a genius for melody should have been retained to the age of eighty, and produce in old age songs like *The Throstle* and *Early Spring*, is almost more amazing. The wealth as well as the beauty of Tennyson's lyrical productions places him in the foremost rank of our lyrists—strong as our literature has been for many centuries in that form of poetry.

The unanimous voice of the public has been right in fastening on the best of these lyrics, so that they have become household words, as familiar as those of Milton or Burns. *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lotos Eaters*, *Break, break, break*, the *Dream of Fair Women*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Light Brigade*, *The Revenge* are equally popular, and in various modes deserve their immense vogue. Above all others are the songs in *The Brook*, in *The Princess*, and in *Maud*. Of them all, no doubt, the songs in *The Princess* are the most bewitching: "The splendour falls on castle walls"—"Tears, idle tears"—"O swallow, swallow"—"Now sleeps the crimson petal"—and lastly "Come down, O maid," with its miraculous couplet, "The moan of doves"—assuredly the most felicitous bit of imitative

music in modern poetry, perhaps even in all English poetry.

Even whilst under the spell of these siren chants, we must not suffer ourselves to be drawn into any false raptures. The lyrics, with all their charm, hardly rise to the Olympian radiance of a lyric by Sappho or Sophocles. They do not move us like *Lycidas* or Shakespeare's songs; no! nor like such ballads as the *Twa Corbies* or the *Land o' the Leal*, *John Anderson, O Waly Waly*, or *Fair Helen*. They have not that audible ring that we hear in Shelley's *Skylark*, and several others of Shelley's best lyrics. No, have they that inexplicable pathos of Lovelace's *Althea*, and some Scottish songs of Burns and Scott. The music of Tennyson's loveliest songs is somewhat languorous.

It is— “ Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes.”

Exquisite, exquisite! but a little cloying—the true moan of melancholy lotos-eaters! In all these songs we faint under the dulcet sounds of harp and flute, but we miss the trumpet and bassoon. We miss the lilt of *Scots Wha Hae*, of *A man's a man for a' that*, the passion of *Duncan Gray*, the indescribable enthrallment of the *Ancient Mariner*. No one thinks of putting Tennyson's place in poetry below that of Burns, Scott, or Coleridge. But even in his happiest lyrics, there is some want of the clarion note that they from time to time could sound.

We do not altogether *hear* Tennyson shout forth these verses: we rather *see* him piecing them together, with consummate art, but without that ungovernable tempest of feeling which marks the highest lyric, so



that speech seems to fail the poet, and he bursts into unrestrainable song. Tennyson's lyrics are all exquisitely melodious and marvellously worked. But the very melody and the work somewhat lessen our sense of their spontaneous inspiration. And of all forms of poetry, lyric most needs the sense of being inspired song, inevitable outpouring of heart.

The essence of lyric is *feeling*—passion, the thrill of joy, anguish, or strife. No one can dispute the feeling of Tennyson's lyrics ; but it is usually clothed in such subtle graces of fancy, in such artful cadences, in such enamelled colouring, that it strikes the imagination more than the heart. We feel this even in such an exquisite ballad as *Edward Gray* ; which, with all its pathos, is somewhat too pretty, too artful, too modern. The songs are not quite simple, and the expression of *feeling* must be simple. Burns's songs are in verbal refinement mere peasant's catches as compared with Tennyson's subtle modulations. But they have the thrill which rings through and through us. We *hear* them sung, even as we do in such immortal songs as "Take, Oh ! take those lips away," or "Come away, come away, Death !" In Molière's *Misanthrope*, Alceste justly prefers "J'aime mieux ma mie, O gai !" to the most ingenious sonnet. That is the supreme charm of Shakespeare's songs—"Full fathom five thy father lies !" "Tell me where is Fancy bred !"—a child can follow this ; might even utter it. No words could be more natural and easy. And this ring from the heart's chords is in Burns's songs, from "O, my Luve is like a red, red rose" down to the tipsy fun of "The Deil cam fiddling through the town." Scott,

who is only a very fine poet in a few songs, has this incommunicable *cantabile*, which Shelley often, Byron and Wordsworth and Keats once or twice, have touched. Tennyson's lyrics, as we all feel, have exquisite music ; but it is the music of recitation, of memory, of thought, rather than of song. They are too luscious, too brocaded to be sung. But if they miss this thrill which forces forth the voice, they gain in poetic colour, in complex harmony, in translucence. Thousands of lovers of *The Princess* linger over the melting cadences of the songs therein—"Tears, idle tears," "O swallow, swallow," "Now sleeps the crimson petal," "Come down, O maid"—without knowing that these lovely lines are composed in heroic blank verse—the same metre as *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*.

But if the songs, with all their "linked sweetness long drawn out," with all that "melting voice through mazes running," speak to us with the mind rather than the voice, Tennyson has appropriated a form of lyric poem which is peculiarly his own, and in which he is supreme. This is the real idyll of which *Ænone* is the type. The *Idylls of the King* are not true idylls. Edmund Lushington wished to call them epylls, or little epics. They are not epics, because they have not the note of sustained heroism—what Matthew Arnold called "the grand manner"; they have too much of *genre*, of sentiment, of modern colouring and ethical reflection. On the other hand, they are not idylls, because they have too much action and pure narration, too much of romantic drama, and too much allegory and moral lesson. But *Ænone* is a true idyll—not too long, a single incident of rural simplicity, a beautiful picture of

an ideal world presented in romantic setting. It is a romance, based on an Homeric legend, but saturated with modern *ethos*. The whole conception is an Hellenic myth in a setting of modern romance. So the idylls of Theocritus, of Virgil, of Tasso, of Shakespeare present to us some tale of antique simplicity with a colouring entirely that of the poet's own. It is a legitimate and exquisite form of art, like the Greek goddesses of Botticelli or Raffaele. And these true idylls of Tennyson are delightful specimens of its resources and its beauties.

*Ænone* was a marvellous production of a youth only just of age ; and it still remains the most delightful of them all. *Ulysses*, but a few years later, had a deeper and grander strain, if it had fewer fancies and charms. And *Tithonus*, begun about the same time as *Ulysses*, is hardly inferior in form. It is astonishing that *Tiresias*, *Ænone's Death*, and *Demeter*, separated from the early idylls by some fifty years, should retain as much of the early fire and music ; but it must be confessed that, to say the least, they add nothing to our enjoyment of these pieces. *St. Simeon Stylites*, *Lucretius*, *Columbus*, *St. Telemachus*, belong to a rather different order of art. They are dramatic and reflective poems, like Wordsworth's *Laodamia* or *Michael*. Tennyson's pure idylls, of which *Ænone* is the gem, offer every perfection of his art, and are the form of poetry which best suits his genius. If they do not possess the magical simplicity of Theocritus at his highest, they have a dignity and thoughtfulness which place them above such popular and melodious pieces as those left us by Bion and Moschus.

The mastery of Tennyson over philosophical argument and pictorial harmonies, and the force with which his masterpieces in meditative and in romantic verses haunt the memory, rather lead us to forget two other forms of art in which he is no less excellent. These are, first, the humorous, secondly the tragic. Few of his pieces are more popular than the *Northern Farmer*, and none more entirely deserves its immense vogue. We must say both forms of the *Northern Farmer*, with their insight into the humours of rural boorishness, middle-class meanness, and their astonishing command of dialect. The poet's command over dialect, as shown in *Owd Roä*, the *Spinster's Sweet-Arts*, in the *Promise of May*, the *Northern Cobbler*, and again of the Irish dialect in *To-morrow*, would be enough to establish a reputation. For their local fidelity is as great as their phonetic ingenuity. These dialect poems, together with the amusing experiments in classical metres, are decisive evidence of the extraordinary ease with which Tennyson strikes from his lyre every note at will. And this command over every kind of metre was the result, not only of his natural genius for rhythm, but of close and unceasing study of prosody, as appears from constant anecdotes and judgments recorded in the *Memoir* by his son.

The humour of the *Northern Farmer*, old and new, has created a type as familiar, and as likely to be enduring, as that of Pecksniff or Becky Sharp or Mrs. Poyser. The *Vision of Sin* was an early revelation of this power; and it was shown as a rare but quite visible thread through the whole of his work, from *The Sleeping Beauty* down to *The Foresters*. Those who

heard the poet talk with friends well know the strain of robust humour which underlay all his intellect and his taste. Indeed, a countryman, entering into casual talk with him during a stroll, or at an inn, might for the first ten minutes have mistaken the poet for a rather rough-and-ready humourist. And the *Memoir* is full of examples of how hearty a gift of humour lay beneath those sombre meditations and subtle modulations which are the familiar type of Tennyson's verse.

Tennyson, it is often said, is not at his best in the ode. Neither of the odes to the Royal Princesses as brides has any particular value beyond an occasional line or phrase ; the *Jubilee Ode* is a melancholy failure ; and the *Exhibition Odes* are not much of a success. But it is not fair to judge a poet by poems commanded of him as laureate on occasions of state. Homer would have been flat if Priam had commanded an ode for the wedding of Troilus and Cressida. But there was one ode in a far nobler strain. The *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* has, to my ears, a note which Tennyson rarely struck—a Doric note of heroic mode, with a breadth and masculine ring of the classical ode of triumph and lament. It is in many things the least Tennysonian of Tennyson's poems. It has his wonderful gift of imitative music, but it is the music of the funeral march as composed by Handel or Beethoven. I remember the ode being recited, when one who had been present at the burial in St. Paul's, having imperfectly heard the recitation, thought it was a recita<sup>l</sup> of the music used at the funeral. The lines, " Bury the great Duke "—" Let the long long procession go," and the whole of the

three strophes with which the ode opens, are a magnificent re-echoing in words of great funeral music—

“And let the mournful martial music blow,  
The last great Englishman is low.”

The whole of these five strophes are worthy of the occasion, and contain lines and couplets which have passed into current use. But the thought with which the sixth opens, the abrupt cry of Nelson from his tomb beneath the dome: “Who is he that cometh like an honoured guest,” this, I hold, is one of the grandest conceptions in modern poetry. The suddenness of this burst from the spirit of our greatest seaman, who had slumbered in peace for half a century, its directness and its simplicity, reach the highest note of lyric imagination, and the extreme boldness of the idea is fully justified by the answer—

“Mighty Seaman, this is he,  
Was great by land as thou by sea.”

This is true poetry, Pindaric, natural, and thrilling, in simple words and devoid of any prettiness of imagery or subtlety of phrase. Tennyson's *Works*—nay, modern poetry—have no nobler inspiration.

However alien to his Muse it may be thought, Tennyson from time to time would find themes of passion, horror, and crime, when he matched himself with Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge in their darkest hours. These themes were not altogether akin to his temperament, and at times he wanted sting and realism for such grim work. But from the first he displayed his power in such a poem as *The Sisters*.

Of course, this was the early *Sisters*—"We were two daughters of one race"—for, oddly enough, in the collected *Works* there are two poems of the same title, and the later *Sisters* is not a success at all. *The Sisters* of the early ballad is a grand and stirring piece, in imitation, no doubt, of the *Twa Corbies* or *Helen of Kirkconnell*, and would be fit to be placed beside these wonderful poems, had it been rather simpler, more reticent, with less of visible artifice. But it is a fine example of the tragic ballad. *Fatima*, again, has the true glow of Eastern passion—

"O Love, O fire ! once he drew  
With one long kiss my whole soul thro'  
My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew."

Tennyson's tragic, or rather melodramatic, romances are not usually so simple, direct, and yet mysterious as this form of poetry demands, to have unqualified success, in spite of their beauty of form. The tragic romance of which the *Twa Corbies* is a perfect type must deal with naked terror, devoid of a single ornament. It must state the prime visible facts with absolute clearness and precision ; it must not fill up the story, but leave much in mystery and horror. Tennyson's essays in this most exacting art are somewhat too elaborate, with too many graces, and too little left obscure. The story is worked out rather too much in detail, and yet is not quite clear. One or other of these defects rather detracts from the value of such pieces as the *Vision of Sin*, *The Victim*, *The Wreck*, *The Flight*, *To-morrow*, and *Forlorn*.

But there is one piece, and that a poem of his latest period, which is a perfect triumph in the style of grisly

romance. *Rizpah* has every quality which a poem of the class demands. The theme is entirely natural; dreadful, and yet historically true—indeed, the poem strictly follows recorded facts. These gruesome facts it narrates with entire plainness, simplicity, and vividness. The story of the mother's agony, madness, and frantic clinging to the bones of her felon son—"the bones that had sucked her, the bones that had moved in her side"—is given with wonderful power. Altogether it is as weird and impressive as anything of the kind in literature. And the passion and delirium of the mother's wail almost reconcile us to the unfortunate metre with sixteen syllables in each line.

A wonderful fact in Tennyson's career as a poet was the prolonged period of his productive power. It extended over no less than sixty-seven years (1827-1894), if we count in the last emendations of the revised *Works*, or to sixty-five years, if we limit it from the earliest to the latest poems. A period so great is almost without example, for it exceeds that of Wordsworth and of Victor Hugo. But, as so often happens with poetic products, the power of the later does not equal that of the earlier inspiration. If we divide the period of Tennyson's poetic activity into two halves, it is obvious that the first half—say, from 1830 to 1860—contains his most important and permanent work. Within this period fall the most familiar *Lyrics*, *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850), *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (1852), *Maud* (1855), *Idylls of the King* (first series, 1859). We cannot count the later *Idylls*, the continu-



ation poems, and the later *Ballads*, as having the power or the vitality of the great typical triumphs of the poet. - At the publication of the first *Idylls of the King* (1859), Tennyson was fifty years old, and he had reached his zenith.

For this reason it is not necessary to discuss the *Dramas*. They were all published at a late period of life ; and their most salient quality is that they were the work of the poet's old age. *Queen Mary*, the earliest of them, was published in 1875, when the poet was in his sixty-sixth year ; *Becket*, the most successful of them, was printed (but not published) in 1879 ; and *The Foresters* was not produced until 1892, when the poet was in his eighty-third year. The four English historical dramas are all finely studied and worked out with that mastery of poetic form and that dignity of conception which Tennyson brought to all his work. They will always have great interest for the students of English literature, and for the lovers of our laureate's art. In an age which had more taste for the higher drama, and less passion for prurient melodrama, they might be seen on the stage more often than they are. Some day it is possible that *Becket*, as an historical drama, and *The Foresters*, as a scenic operetta, may be adapted by a modern playwright, and heard with pleasure by a cultivated audience. But the seven dramas, taken as a whole, add nothing to the enduring place in our poetic roll which Tennyson will hold ; nor would it increase the honour we pay to his genius, were we to discuss the dramas in detail, or insist on their public performance.

## HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH POETRY (1909).

Ten years have passed since I made bold to claim for Tennyson a special rank of his own among our English poets: one without rival during the long Victorian era, and during the amazing period of his creative work, which was prolonged for sixty years. It is twenty years since he published the last of these fascinating volumes, and we may now judge his place in the glorious roll of our island singers free from the glamour of his melody, without favour, partisanship, or fear of offence.

Again I make bold to insist that Tennyson still reigns in our hearts as alone the peer of Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth. No others since Wordsworth's death in 1850, since his long silence for many previous years, can pretend to stand beside these four in the first half of the nineteenth century; and, in the second half of the century, Tennyson alone is of their rank. To-day, in this centenary of his birth, I wish to consider two questions: What is Tennyson's place in relation to these four earlier poets? What is his place in the roll of all our poets since Chaucer?

Sound judgment insists that poets, like all writers (except perhaps the moral philosophers), have to be judged by their successes, not by their failures—by their splendid triumphs rather than by any calculable average or sum total of their product. All our poets (except Milton and Gray) published poetry that we can well do without, and, with the exception of Milton, for I will not disown *Paradise Regained*, they have all left poems which are sadly inferior to their

own best. This, alas, is true even of Chaucer and of Spenser—nay, even of Shakespeare himself ; at least, of some plays which bear his name. As to Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth (not to speak of Dryden or of Pope and their schools and imitators ; to say nothing of Cowper and Crabbe, their imitators and their schools), they have all left us poems which have truly irritating defects.

Byron, who, with all his sins, was our greatest poetic force since Milton, was the worst offender against the form of poetry, with his incurable habit of breaking out into ragged doggerel and conventional rhetoric. Shelley, again, who is conspicuously free from these crimes, too often becomes so vague, transcendental, and impalpable that one must be an esoteric illuminist to absorb the rays from so distant a star. Matthew Arnold for once quite broke his divining rod of criticism when he called Shelley an "ineffectual angel." But we do feel sometimes that Shelley was a truant angel who had lost his way, or rather was lost to human ken in the far-off empyrean. Nor had Shelley, with all his radiant light, the Titanic fire of Byron.

Poor Keats died prematurely before he had brought to full ripeness his matchless gifts, and they still unearth and reissue stuff of his which were raw experiments, or which should never meet the public eyes. Then, dear old Wordsworth, who in his best hour could wing his way beside Milton himself, would drone on for days and months together in insufferable commonplace. Yet, for all their misfires, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth were glorious poets. In judging poetry we must not weigh it by the ton as

if it were a cartload of bricks ; nor must failures be allowed to detract from successes. We must take account of nothing but the best.

Now, it is the peculiar distinction of Tennyson that, in spite of his immense product, as great as that of Byron or of Wordsworth, he is never ragged, obscure, raw, or tiresome. His consummate taste and refined ear saved him from ever sinking into vulgarity, commonplace, or a cloudland of melodious words, which were the favourite sins of Byron, of Wordsworth, of Shelley, and of Keats.

This is a rare distinction, but its value must not be overstated. In our estimate of poetry we must avoid the reckoning-up blunders such as examiners score with blue pencil and use to subtract marks. If we did, loose-tongued, hot-headed Byron would be left at the bottom of the list. We have to take into account the sum of the truly fine things given us by the poet, the amount, variety, and range of the fine things, the permanent harvest of beauty, power, and insight contained in them, of a kind which is independent of place, time, or fashion. And in weighing it in this measure we have to admit that uniform grace and polish do not constitute in themselves a claim to the highest rank of poetry. If so, Gray would stand next after Milton. In the Day of Judgment, they tell us, gross offences may be forgiven for the sake of transcendent merits, which will outweigh a long life of decorous virtue such as needs no expiation.

For this reason the polished perfection of Tennyson's vast product could not raise him to a rank above

that of Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth, and almost to a par with Milton, unless his best work were greater than their best. In the heyday of his popularity with æsthetic graduates of both sexes, and with the hot zealots of Church and State, this perfection of polish was thought to raise him to a trio with Shakespeare and Milton. And he himself, perhaps, would not have very stoutly resented such homage. But the time is past for such ephemeral adulation. Tennyson will hold rank with the best poets of the nineteenth century ; but he is certainly not in any class above them.

Turn first to Byron. Byron's best lovers ruefully admit that he had a tempestuous way of throwing off his thoughts roughcast—that he always wrote at a white heat, and too often left his first drafts uncorrected ; that he sometimes descended to rant, jingle, and ribaldry. It is a grievous fault—and grievously has Byron answered it. His whole immense output was made not in sixty but in little more than fifteen years. For four or five years he poured out poems at the scandalous rate of some hundreds of lines each day. This is no sort of excuse for a poet's indifference to poetic form. And if he had never done justice to his gifts, it would be decisive against Byron's claim to be a great poet. But it is not so. He often did do justice to his genius, in form as well as in thought. Many parts of *Childe Harold*, of *Don Juan*, of *Manfred*, of the lyrics, even of the early romances, are as full of metrical charm as of noble imagination. If we were to sacrifice two-thirds of his hasty work, we should still have a rich volume of fine poetry.

In his hours of true inspiration Byron proved himself to be a master of poetic form, in pure lyrics, in lyrical drama, in romantic, picturesque, passionate, and satiric verse. But his claim to high poetic rank lies in the imaginative power of the man. Those who will not admit him to be a poet at all admit the magnetism of his personal force. He had that rare creative genius which belongs to those who have stirred whole ages and diverse races. There is a curious French phrase which hits off this quality: "he had fire in his belly." With all his ribaldry and pose, Byron had flashes of that fire which burned in King David, in Æschylus, in Dante, and in Milton. He had the power which created new epochs in Greece, in Italy, which still, after nearly a hundred years, continues to resound in France, in Germany, in Scandinavia, in Russia, and in America. He literally created Greece as a nation; and he must be counted as one of the founders of Italian independence. *Manfred* has in it a sort of Dantesque vision of Man and Destiny which lifts it above any similar English poem of the nineteenth century, and places it beside *Faust*, as Goethe so justly and generously felt. Tens of thousands of cultivated men and women in Europe and in America delight in Byron, while they never heard of Keats and never read a line of Wordsworth; and some fastidious critics tell us that is because Byron is 'obvious.' Byron is obvious in the sense of not being obscure; indeed, Horace or Pope is not more perfectly intelligible and direct. But it is not poetic mastery to be able to construct enigmas in verse; and it is one of the fads of our time to

vaunt the industrious interpretation of metrical cryptograms.

Byron, after nearly a hundred years, is known throughout the civilised world. He is even a national poet both in Italy and in Greece. He has spoken to the hearts as well as to the imagination of whole races : he strikes light and heat out of everything he touches : he moves the thought and warms the spirit as only an original genius can. It is affectation to tell us that the man who does this is not a poet because he flung off a good deal of scrambling stuff which he ought to have burnt.

It is an ancient jest that *Childe Harold* is only *Baedeker* in rhyme, and that his Greek lyrics are artificial heroics. Why, half the sense of mysterious antiquity and poetic colour which the nineteenth century felt for Italy—all the passion it felt for the Alps—was due to Byron, who did for the English and for Americans what Goethe did for Germans and Madame de Staël and Rousseau did for the French. As to love of the sea, no verse has ever done so much as Byron's. Greek patriotism is literally the creation of Byron, for to every Hellene Byron is what Burns is to every Scot. This power of Byron to fuse his ideas into whole races places him as the first in rank, as he is the first in time, of the poets of the nineteenth century. In this palpable historic force, neither Shelley, nor Keats, nor Wordsworth approach Byron. Their reputation is strictly English : Byron's is European. They are read only by the cultivated, Byron by all. Now, we cannot assign to Tennyson either the European vogue or the universal popu

larity which for nearly a hundred years Byron has possessed.

We must not be misled by Swinburne's spasmodic reviling of Byron. His mouthing in praise of Marlowe and in abuse of Byron is a type of that ill-balanced partisan criticism which does so much harm. Never trust a poet to judge a poet, nor a painter to judge a picture. They have loves and hates of their own manner or pet fancy. Now, Morley's estimate of Byron is far more broad and just. Swinburne had an exquisite sense of melody, albeit of a somewhat languorous and monotonous note. Indeed, he often indulged in what school boys call 'nonsense verses'—lines which would scan but mean nothing. Our age is too prone to value the grace and music of mere words rather than thought, passion, and vision. It is a sign of a pedant's affectation to take Swinburne to be a greater poet than Byron. And for the same reason we must not allow Tennyson's exquisite form to blind us to the mass, the variety, the electric shock of Byron's thunder-peal.

When we weigh Byron in this scale—taking account of his mass, variety, and fire, and, above all his power over men of different race and language—it is impossible to place Tennyson above him. Tennyson is purely, permanently English—nor do Scotland, Wales, Ireland, much less the Alps, the Apennines, Rome, Venice, Athens, the Atlantic, or the Ægean, ever wring from him a cry of love and joy. Can we suppose that a century hence Englishmen will chant their Tennyson as Scots chant Burns, or as Italians and Greeks still worship Byron? Byron, Shelley, and



Keats lived in worlds of antique mystery and passion, of broadly European nature, of the manifold humanity common to all men of any tongue who care for imaginative work. Tennyson's "measured language" and "sad mechanic exercise," however beautiful and enchanting, belong exclusively to English homes, rectories, colleges, and cathedral closes—are eminently local, insular, and academic.

Nor can any true lover of poetry rank Tennyson above Shelley. For, in the first place, Shelley has a polish of form at least equal to that of Tennyson, if we allow for the accidents of Shelley's text. And the true lover of poetry finds in *Prometheus*, in *Hellas*, in the *West Wind*, in the *Skylark* a melodious thrill such as not only Tennyson never sounded, but no English poet save Shakespeare and Milton alone. It is true that there is a great deal of Shelley which is too subtle and too ethereal for 'the general,' and perhaps will ever remain the privilege of the cultured few, and for the most part of English race.

Shelley has no small measure of Byron's human and social enthusiasm, of his passion for the splendour and majesty of Nature, of that trumpet-note of humanity, of that vision of a regenerate future, which in Byron redeem his many sins against true taste. If Shelley did not impose his personality upon his age as did Byron, he was undoubtedly a far more consummate master of his poetic instrument. And in this he must be counted as even superior to Tennyson; whilst it would be difficult to produce any important addition to English poetry in the veteran Victorian poet which we could not match in the early Georgian poet, cut

off in his prime. To rank Tennyson above Shelley would be to rank him also above Byron. And yet, with all his faultless metrical resources, Tennyson wants the intellectual force of Byron and the intellectual distinction of Shelley.

The case is different with Keats ; for Keats himself is only a promise, and his small volume of poems is itself but a fragment. We must never forget that what we prize of Keats was written before he was twenty-four—at an age before Milton had written *Lycidas* or Shakespeare had written *Venus and Adonis*. As I said once, Keats was “ an unformed, untrained, neuropathic youth of genius whose whole achievement came earlier in life than that of almost any other man recorded in our literature, indeed in any literature.” It is rather irritating to find some neuropathic critics of our decadence asserting that Keats’s really magical gift for poetic form—a gift that reminds us of that of Sappho or Theocritus—was enough to constitute him a poet of the first rank. Keats will always be to us a great ‘ Perhaps ’—one who might have been one knows not what—*si qua fata aspera rumpat*. Yet, whatever the wonderful promise of the hapless youth, neither his range of vision, nor his force, nor his intellect were such as to place him in the foremost rank. The large achievement, the serious thought, and the inexhaustible fancy of Tennyson are of an altogether different order and appeal to a far maturer mind.

We more easily compare Tennyson with Wordsworth. Both had very long life, wholly and solely devoted to the poetic art ; they were essentially poets of Nature ; both given to meditation, moral and

religious musing rather than to action ; both have exercised a permanent influence over the poetic ideal of their age Wordsworth carried his love of solitary musing and of rustic simplicity to a point where they often degenerated into tiresome reiteration and even laughable banality ; whilst Tennyson's unerring taste kept him free from such vexatious commonplace. The most ardent Wordsworthians agree to leave out of account no small part of Wordsworth's immense product ; whilst no loyal Tennysonian would imitate their example. Though Tennyson published much which is not equal to his best, he never wearies us with truly unreadable prosing as does Wordsworth. Yet Wordsworth's best is of an order quite as high as is Tennyson's best. To say the truth, I turn more often to the *Excursion* than to *In Memoriam* ; and there are sonnets, odes, and lyrics of Wordsworth which I would not sacrifice even to save the *Idylls*, *Maud*, and lyrics of Tennyson's early and best manner.

Neither Coleridge, nor Scott, nor Burns, nor Campbell, nor Landor belong to the first rank as poets, however ardent be our delight in their special triumphs. The *Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and a few lyrics and hymns are a joy for ever ; but the sum of Coleridge's muse is neither full enough nor powerful enough to place him beside Byron, Shelley, or Tennyson. Burns is so exclusively national, and Scott is so entirely the romancist, that we do not count either as in the foremost roll of English poetry, with all the exquisite ring of their lovely songs and ballads. And Campbell, Landor, and some others who have left us memorable things have not given us enough in measure and in

power to place them amongst the greatest names of the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century will adjudge this rank to Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Keats, and beyond question Tennyson will be held to be their peer. Their peer, I say, not their superior; or, if superior to any one of the four, to Keats, on the ground that his work is fragmentary and immature. But I cannot believe that any other poet of the second half of the century will permanently be placed beside the great men of the first half. Our beloved Robert Browning belongs in a sense to the first as well as to the second half of the nineteenth century; and, though he touches at times on Byron's and on Shelley's themes, he must be counted rather of the later Victorian world. By the 'later Victorian world' I mean that of subtle, psychologic, analytic conception, of elaborately minted phrase, and daring metrical experiments.

Browning had rare genius, a keen and broad view of life, masculine philosophy, creative power; and in these gifts he was more akin to Byron than was Tennyson. We need not deny the contention of ardent Browningites that his mental force was both deeper and more robust than that of Tennyson. But a poet needs not only mental force but unique form, melody, grace, the inevitable and unforgettable word which gives wings to his thought. Browning has given us now and then a ballad and a lyric of glorious music, apparently to show us that he could write musical verse when he deigned to humour us. But a great poet does not bury profound ideas in cryptograms that we have to unravel as if they were

puzzle-locks, nor does he twist and torture the King's English into queer vocables that raise a smile.

We have just lost two men of genius, both of whom were typical examples of the later Victorian world—though in quite opposite veins. Meredith was a brilliant novelist rather than a poet ; and all he had to say in poetry—and he had the poetic soul—would have been more truly said in prose. Nature had denied him an ear for music in verse, to which he seems insensible, just as Beethoven's deafness never permitted him to hear his own magnificent symphonies. For all its subtlety and originality, Meredith's verse is unreadable by reason of its intolerable cacophony. I doubt if he ever wrote a piece which would have satisfied Tennyson's infallible sense of harmonious rhythm.

Swinburne, on the other hand, with a singular gift for harmonious rhythm, seemed to regard this quality as the be-all and end-all of poetry. For my part, I cannot feel that he ever added much after he first burst upon the world with the splendid promise of his *Atalanta* in 1865, though for more than forty years he continued to publish poems. His marvellous metrical agility, the melodious piping in honied words 'long drawn-out,' the apparently inexhaustible fountain of harmonies at his command, all this for a time is fascinating. But ere long the flow of mellifluous epithets and of haunting rhymes begins to pall on us. The verse lives in a tarantula of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and artful concatenation of sounds. It is very beautiful ; but at last it becomes monotonous, cloying, a mannerism. And what does it all come

to in the end? What is there to think out? What does it mean? For what is all this passion? And why do these interminable sonatas never end—or why, indeed, should they end? Only in the decadence of a silver age could Swinburne be placed in a rank with Tennyson.

If neither Browning nor Swinburne will hereafter take rank with Tennyson, surely no others of his contemporaries or successors will do so. Let us have done with cliques, and schools, and fads! For my part I honour and enjoy them all in turn; but I will not let my honour or my delight blind me to defects in those I love; nor will a balanced judgment suffer me to exalt a favourite for some conspicuous charm. Shakespeare and Milton stand apart in a world of their own, without rival or peer—*hors concours*—for they are the poets not of English literature but of all literature. Chaucer and Spenser are more honoured than read; the men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are more read than honoured. And we now feel sure that Tennyson will hold an honoured place with the great names of the nineteenth century—not above them, hardly below them, but finally enrolled in their glorious company.

## ON THE ATTIC DRAMA

IN the Greek world the higher Poetry, in Epic, Hymns, Lyrics, and Dramas, stood to these peoples as a religious power. It was the direct outcome of their religious traditions and was a familiar manifestation of religion. The great poets were really priests ; the Epics and Hymns were ritual and services ; the grander Poems were at once educational Scriptures and congregational manuals of devotion. This does not mean, as modern church people may be apt to suppose, that since Polytheism was a poor, debased, and unspiritual substitute for religion, they had to fall back on mere human poetry, and were fain to take fine poems and beautiful forms of earthly life as being the nearest symbol of things sacred or supreme that they could find in their lives.

Not so ! Greek poetry, in its highest forms, was religious in the true sense, as human religion understands the term ; that it is religious for us to-day, as much as for the Lesbians or Athenians of old ; that Homer has done as much for the true spiritual progress of mankind as Moses, David, or Isaiah ; that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* should be as much part of our Bible as the Psalms or the Major and Minor Prophets. We are altogether on the wrong path so long as we

fail to see that poetry must be inspired by religion, if it claims to be great poetry at all ; and that religion must be humanly and really poetic, if it is ever again to be the supreme master and guide of human life. Pedantry and scepticism combined have placed a gulf between religion and poetry, by which both have suffered. Poetry has become too much of a literary amusement ; and religion has become too much of a mystical quietism.

This, of course, implies that by religion we mean a power which is co-extensive with human nature and can exert its influence over the whole of human life. Religion must be made real and human through great poetry. And poetry must be made social and spiritual through practical religion. No religion can permanently touch man's life unless it speaks through great human poetry, or if it pretends to vaunt itself as independent of, and superior to, great human poetry. No poetry has abiding power or can rise to the highest level, if it claims to be outside of any religious sympathy or sanction. No mere literature can be great poetry, just as no anti-human hypotheses can be practical religion. Thus, the mission of the Epics was grander and more truly sacred than that of the Psalms of Israel, for they sprang out of wider and more humane sympathies with life as a whole than Hebrew War Songs and Lamentations.

This is more true of the great dramatists of Athens than it is of Homer. And we need to dwell on the spiritual meaning of the highest triumphs of that wonderful art, which has been the standard of the drama to the civilised world for two thousand years.



Of all other dramatists Æschylus presents us with the obvious type of the religious uses of the drama. We know far more of Æschylus than of Homer, of the Attic drama than of the early Epic. There tragedy had its origin in religion; it was itself a religious ceremony, and was a function of religion surrounded with religious symbols and forms. And we know the soul and nature of Æschylus as well as we know that of Isaiah or St. Paul, or Dante or Milton. No great poet has ever more completely revealed himself to us as a man. No poet has ever more passionately thrown his own soul into his works. No poet (not Dante, nor Milton, nor Wordsworth) has manifested in verse a more profound sense of vital religion.

Æschylus was born at Eleusis near Athens five-and-thirty years before the great Persian invasion. His origin and early history are full of significance. Eleusis was one of the oldest and most famous cities of Greece, associated for a thousand years down to Christian ages with the Mysteries which undoubtedly had a primitive source in the Oriental myths of Nature Worship. Putting aside the crude Greek derivation of the name of the city from the 'Arrival' of Demeter, I always associate the name with the Hebrew town of Eleph (or the Ox), allotted to Benjamin by Joshua, and said to denote the pastoral character of the tribe. Eleusis stands in the rich Thriasian plain, and may have been a very early settlement of some Phœnician or Syrian traders, who left their name and the mystic rites of some Goddess of the abundance of Earth. It is said that his father, Euphorion, was an official of the Mysteries, and thus from childhood he was

associated with the most venerable ritual of the ancient world.

There is a tradition that, as a boy, after attending the representation of the Dionysian festival, the god appeared to him in a vision and bade him devote himself to the drama, then only in its rudimentary stage. At the age of twenty-six he presented his first tragedy. His first victory was not won till he was forty-one, about midway between the great battles of Marathon and of Salamis, in both of which he and his brothers had a glorious part. As a poet, Æschylus had a singularly late development. None of his extant dramas were produced until he was forty-seven. His greatest tragedy, the *Trilogy*, the greatest tragedy in all literature, was not produced till he was sixty-seven. Like so many other Athenians he was accused of impiety, and was exiled or withdrew for safety like Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, Thucydides, Alcibiades, Socrates, Xenophon, Pheidias, Plato, and Euripides. The Athenian democracy prosecuted its greatest soldiers as well as its greatest thinkers, as is the way of ignorant and jealous mobs.

Æschylus shares with Dante, Cervantes, and Camoens the character of a poet who had fought in pitched battles, and I often think Shakespeare must have served abroad in his youth. But Æschylus is far the greatest warrior of all, for he took an heroic part in the two most famous battles of the world. His poetry breathes throughout the fire of war; and in his *Persians* he gives a vivid picture of the greatest sea-fight in all history. By a fortunate coincidence in the great fight off Salamis, on which hung the fate

of the future civilisation of Europe, there was serving in the victorious fleet the greatest tragic poet in the history of the world ; and a few years after it this poet presented the scene to his triumphant comrades in a lyric and dramatic pageant which is still the noblest Hymn to patriotism in the records of man. There is none more glorious than the speech of the Herald to the mother of Xerxes as he tells the awful tale of ruin and defeat.

Then the trumpet rang out its rousing note along their ranks above the splashing of the waves, the hurtling of the oars, and the captain's call of command. And as their serried ranks dashed on together a great roar rose, so that we could hear them cry :—

“ Sons of the Greeks charge on. Strike for the freedom of your fatherland. For the freedom of your children and your wives and the shrines of your fathers' gods. Fight for the tombs of your forefathers. The struggle this day is for your all on earth.”

Æschylus is the poet of valour and patriotism as he recorded (it is said) on his own tomb—

“ Æschylus, son of Euphorion, lies beneath this monument : he died in fertile Gela [in Sicily, and in exile, away from his own land]. The weald by Marathon may tell the tale of his proven valour, and the long-tressed Median, for he had full knowledge of it.”

Not a word of poetry !

I hold the loss of the seventy plays of Æschylus, of which we have no trace but titles and fragments, to be perhaps the most cruel blow that literature has ever sustained. Not only was Æschylus the greatest

tragic poet of the world, but he was the creator of tragedy as an art—in a way that no other man has ever created an art. We do not believe that the author of the *Iliad* created epic; nor did Pheidias create sculpture. We know that Shakespeare did not create the Elizabethan drama. Nor did Herodotus, “the father of History,” really create historical record. Nor did Boccaccio create the novel, nor did Giotto create modern painting. But Æschylus did create Tragedy—which before him was a sort of Mummer’s rhapsody at a Sacred Fair. It was Æschylus who invented dialogue and action by doubling the actors, and he soon followed Sophocles by accepting a third actor as well as the Chorus. He limited and arranged the Chorus, which now became the accompaniment instead of the protagonist. He invented the use of majestic scenery as a background, he gave the actors a noble and imposing costume, and threw over the whole stage that atmosphere of sublimity and heroic dignity which breathes in every line he wrote.

This mighty genius conceived in mind and created in visible form one of the grandest instruments of human art. He transformed what had been down to his time a lyric celebration of Bacchic emotion into an inspiring expression of heroic character and life. Perhaps it was in this sense that, according to a plausible tradition, he called his plays “morsels from the rich banquets of Homer.” His extant dramas deal but slightly with the epic personages and myths; and the saying may mean only that he substituted great poetic action for the traditional ritual of sacred revelry.

He made the theatre a new vehicle for transfiguring the great lessons of human destiny and moral struggle. In this way, no doubt, Cicero calls Æschylus a Pythagorean, as a follower of the most spiritual and social of philosophic creeds. Æschylus was a stern and passionate supporter of the old traditions and of the Homeric conservation of a semi-feudal chieftainship. He was a warm apostle of the pervading power of religion in the sense of a just Providence, of the duties of hospitality, of the sanctity of oaths, of claims of family, and of the marriage bond. And in the deeply ethical and spiritual sincerity with which he treated these, he did not scruple to break away from the formal theologies and obsolete formulas of past ages—even holding up Zeus to moral indignation, casting aside the doubtful intervention of divine oracles. Thus, conservative as he was, Æschylus offended the ignorant democracy of a jealous people, and was accused of impiety and want of faith.

Æschylus was thus at once a great reformer in religion and also a profound conservative in morals. His conception of virtuous life and of an overruling Providence was far too spiritual to fall in with the archaic licence of the Homeric Olympus. And withal his conception of the primary institutions and duties of civilised life was abhorrent of the critical and sceptical logic of the new sophistry. Thus he stood fast by all that was solid and enduring in the public and domestic traditions of his forefathers, whilst he felt that a new humane and social morality could not be bound by the popular hymnology about Zeus and Hera, Aphrodite and Bacchus. In the religious

aspect Æschylus was a Puritan, an Idealist, a Reformer, a sort of Athenian Latimer, Cromwell, or Milton.

Primarily, Æschylus is a warrior, a patriot, a man of honour. His style rings with a clarion call to arms. His persons breathe the heroic spirit of the great age. There is in him much of the spirit of the older Romans, of Coriolanus, Camillus, Fabricius, and Cato. In his *Prometheus*, Æschylus ranges almost with Shelley in a magnificent appeal to the efforts of Humanity to free itself from antique tyranny and superstition. Would that we could have had Æschylus' play *Prometheus Released*. The *Prometheus* as we have it is one of the most stupendous triumphs of human imagination—hardly a drama, or, if a drama, a species of sacred Oratorio; for it is more a lyric, or a monologue, than a tragedy, but as a Dithyrambic Hymn to the power of Will in Man it has hardly its equal in literature sacred or profane.

For tragedy pure and simple, with all the incidents of a great drama worked out to a systematic end, the Trilogy of *Oresteia* stands in the foremost place. In mass, in intensity, in accumulated horror, in unity of idea and of tone, and in statuesque sublimity of execution, this triple tragedy has never been equalled. We need not doubt that *Lear* and *Hamlet* have a subtle and profound poetry even higher and wider, or that *Othello* and *Macbeth* have ethical mysteries even more intricate. But the *Trilogy* remains still supreme in concentrated majesty and power.

I go further, and insist that in the quality of sublimity no poet has been quite the equal of Æschylus

—neither Dante nor Shakespeare nor Milton—I mean in the creative fire of imagination that can bring to life before the eyes of all mankind, so long as human language shall remain, beings so imposing, so original, so superhuman and yet so living; nor has any poet painted scenes of weird imagery so sublime, so gorgeous, and withal so eternal in their realism and truth. Take the scene on Caucasus at the opening of the *Prometheus*, the magnificent silence of the tortured demi-god, the lyrical beauty of the sea-nymphs who fly round him in pity, the indomitable defiance of the catastrophe, the prophetic constancy of the Friend of Man in martyrdom amidst the fury of Gods above and the crash of Nature.

I take again the bursting forth of the Beacon fire which has been watched and longed for during ten weary years, the home-coming of the victorious monarch amid sinister warnings, mysterious chants of coming doom, the piercing wail of Cassandra, the intolerable agony of suspense which swells to an oppressive omen as the Queen leads her victim within. Then the silence, the awe, the mystery, the sense of impending bloodshed broken at last by the shriek of the prophetess and the groan of the king. And, whilst all without are torn by anxiety and alarm, Clytemnestra appears with the bloody axe, avowing and glorying in her crime, defying all who might dare to question her right to take vengeance for her child—standing over the dead like a lioness at bay over her prey. The whole range of the drama contains no scene so tremendous, so vivid, so rich in mass, pathos, and intensity of colour.

It is significant that the men who, to my knowledge, have held Æschylus in the highest honour—one in the ancient world, one in the modern world—are these two: Aristophanes, who heard the plays on the stage, and Auguste Comte in a miserable French prose translation of the eighteenth century. I was looking over Comte's books in his rooms in Paris with Pierre Laffitte when I found a dingy 12mo prose version of Æschylus. "How could he have such a book?" I asked. Laffitte replied, "Well! he had no other, he could not read Greek." And with this little scrap of a translation Comte seized the overpowering superiority of Æschylus to all the tragedians—the profoundly religious bent of his genius, his Homeric soul, his passionate revolt from the old Theocracy, his inspiration of the great hour of Greek heroism, the defence of the new world of freedom and inquiry against the oriental tyranny of the old Theocracies.

Æschylus was one of the great religious teachers of the world, to be ranked with Isaiah, Pythagoras, perhaps with Mahomet and even Dante. Comte saw what Aristophanes could not see, that Æschylus is the poetic voice of the one great epoch in Greek history. Aristophanes in the *Frogs* gives a wonderful picture of Æschylus' style. He brings out the heroic temper, the proud and stately self-will, the fiery imagination, the avalanche of great thoughts and high ideals, and the superabundant splendour that he threw into his work. The chorus begins as the poetic duel between Euripides and Æschylus opens—with Sophocles for umpire.

"What torrents of fiercely-battling words shall we now have! They will shine like the glancing of helms in the



fight, waving with crested plumes on high ! What high-prancing charges of speech from the mighty master of mind ! How he will shake his shaggy mane and bristle his bushy locks, knitting in wrath his terrible brows and roaring as a lion over his prey, hurling huge-jointed phrases about as if they were masses of timber from a ship's side, bound fast in bolts of iron ; and these he will breathe forth with the Titanic blast of his lungs."

## SOPHOCLES AND EURIPIDES.

Aristophanes does not venture to put Sophocles in competition with Æschylus ; he adroitly reserves him to be the arbiter ; but he makes Euripides overwhelmed by his tremendous rival. The comic poet is fully alive to the subtle psychology of Euripides, to his ingenuity and invention, his literary audacity, and his inexhaustible pathos. We all feel that, and to-day more than ever. Euripides was the herald of 'modernity,' and we are all 'modernists' to-day—even 'futurists': the twentieth century is Euripides' 'day' ! But, to compare Æschylus with Euripides is to compare Dante with Ibsen, or Milton with Robert Browning. They are not *in pari materia* ; they have no common ground.

So quickly did the great spiritual aim of the Attic drama die out, so early did literary refinement and artistic enjoyment of cultured form succeed to an imaginative gospel of noble life, that at the age of fifty-seven Æschylus was displaced in the judgment of his time by the exquisite art of Sophocles, who was but twenty-seven years old. Æschylus himself was forty-one before he won the prize. With some

seventy-seven plays he won the prize but thirteen times, whilst Sophocles and Euripides carried it off twice or three times as often. By the voice of antiquity, including that of Aristotle, it would seem Sophocles was the tragic poet, as Homer was the epic poet. Such are the verdicts of literary prizes and of Academies of Letters.

To be devoted to the glorious power of Æschylus is not to be blind to the magical versatility of Euripides—much less to the exquisite grace of Sophocles. His consummate mastery of tone, with its severe abhorrence of violence and monstrosities, the matchless purity of his language, and the subtle symmetry of his tragic catastrophes—all as inimitable and as faultless as a statue of Praxiteles—have made Sophocles, in ancient and in modern times, the ideal of the literary conception of great tragedy. Aristotle found, as the world has found, the type of tragedy in the two dramas of *Œdipus*. The wonderful ingenuity of the plot, even with some inexplicable dilemmas as to actual facts, the terrible winding of the net of Fate round a noble and innocent man, the fall from greatness and prosperity to abject misery, the *crescendo* of horror, pity, and confusion make *King Œdipus* the most consummate work of tragic art. And then, in the *Œdipus at Colonus*, the mystic transfiguration of the blind and outlawed King into a demi-god amidst the sweet peace of the local sanctuary and the ministration of his daughters forms the relief from the intolerable agony of the King's dethronement and torture. As we study the three tragedies of the *Œresteia*, the two tragedies of *Œdipus*, we protest

against the error of isolating Greek tragedies from their sequences, of allied series and the current myths. Almost every Attic drama was an Act, as it were, of a complex catastrophe, or was an incident in a familiar myth. Hardly any one stood by itself as *Hamlet* or *Othello* stand complete within their own Acts. When we see *Ædipus the King* on the stage we know nothing of the lyric restoration to peace and rest in the sublime *finale* of *Ædipus at Colonus*. That is unpresentable on our stage. And without it the agony of the first tragedy is too poignant.

But with all the majestic perfection of the two *Ædipus* plays and of the others of Sophocles, I do not find in them the Titanic imagery of the *Prometheus*, nor the sublime wrestling of heroes with Gods and Destiny as told in the *Trilogy*. Though it is difficult to rank the *Prometheus Bound*—the only one that is left us—as a tragedy pure and simple, yet I hold it to be an Apocalypse of human power quite unequalled even by Dante, Calderon, or Milton. Nor did Shakespeare ever touch the tremendous intensity of Clytemnestra's blood-guiltiness, defiance, punishment, and the expiation of her son and executioner. No! that mighty Passion-Play of the primeval world stands forth for ever as the tragic tale graven deepest in the soul of Humanity.

It is true that with Sophocles the moral problems of humanity are by no means overlooked or distorted. They are constantly and justly faced. But they are placed on a much more practical and logical plane, and are treated with far less of mysticism and awe, with far more indulgence and suavity than

by Æschylus. Sophocles never defies the antique superstitions of his time ; he uses them like a consummate artist ; he never risks an accusation of impiety or of ' modern ' thoughts. He presents to his hearers the temptations, vices, and punishments of men with all the careful balance of a conscientious judge in a court of morality and honour. He is always, like Bossuet, a pathetic preacher of courtly sermons on the ways of Providence and the sorrows of man. It is an exquisite and edifying type of religious teaching. But it has not altogether the passionate inspiration of a Paul, a Dante, or a Milton. Now Æschylus had this in a measure never approached by drama, whether before or since.

They who place Euripides below both Æschylus and Sophocles do not dispute the splendid versatility, pathos, and subtlety of that poet, and are not blind to the world-wide influence which he has continued to shed over the whole field of dramatic literature from his own day to our own. In Greece for generations he ruled supreme. Roman tragedy, such as it was, was founded on his ideas, and Latin plays were rude parodies of his. The French dramas were essentially Euripidean. His laws, forms, and ethic held them spell-bound and hypnotised. And to a great extent this was so with the Italian tragic drama, and the Frenchified English drama of Dryden and Otway. And to-day, with ourselves,\* the influence of Euripides is again rising to the front rank, largely owing to the work of one of the most brilliant and most learned scholars of our age. Now, a power of this enduring and pervading kind could have been

achieved only by a poet of the very highest order in the literature of the world.

The key to the problem of the relative greatness of Euripides turns on the point of his leading an artistic and moral revolution in Attic drama. It is agreed by all that he did this. Was it a glorious and unqualified success? If it were not this, it was a step downwards in a (perhaps inevitable) decadence that the state of Athens, its art, its literature, and its manners all shared alike. Euripides, it is certain, attempted to develop the tragic drama somewhat on the lines which have been splendidly filled in modern ages by dramatists from Marlowe to Ibsen and by romance from Boccaccio and Chaucer down to Richardson, Goethe, and Victor Hugo. Clearly, Euripides is the most 'modern' of the ancient dramatists. But the revolution he founded was fatally incomplete and distorted. This prophet of a new epoch was not free, but was in the bonds of the old epoch. He sought to 'modernise' the heroic world. And in the end he was neither really heroic nor truly modern.

The career of Euripides coincides with the long agony and disastrous war of Athens which led to her ruin. It was a time of burning questions, of wild expectations, and angry revolt from cherished ideals. The dramas of Euripides seethe with all these—they are critical, disputatious, sceptical, sentimental, and cynical. They cover the conventions and sanctities of old time with scorn as of a Voltaire and a Swift. Do they establish or even suggest the sanctities and verities of a new time? It can hardly be said that anything solid or wholesome is given in lieu of what

the poet ridicules and condemns. With all his exquisite lyricism, pathos, brilliancy of invention, psychologic subtlety and bold thought, Euripides remained a social and artistic revolutionary. Was the revolution pregnant with great issues? In his hands, in that age of chaos and loose thought, it was not destined to a great new birth. They who hold that any revolution, any new ideas were a good thing in themselves will hold to Euripides, come what may. They who feel that Shelley, Browning, Ibsen, and Tolstoy have displaced and made obsolete Dante, Milton, Spenser, and Wordsworth will take their stand with Young Athens when it gave the first prize in the festival of Dionysus to the author of *Hippolytus* and *Electra*. For my part, I take my stand along with Aristophanes in the *Frogs*.

But, in casting a humble vote in the greatest contest in all human literature, I would not be taken to undervalue the wonderful gifts of Euripides in his own special lines—the limpid charm of his verse, the passion of his heroines, the subtle vision into character, motive, and intellect. We always begin our zest for Greek tragedy with Euripides. We know him better than his rivals. We have far more of his works to study, and we find them more easy, more familiar, more akin to our time. In the ancient world he was the representative poet of Athens, and no doubt he will long so continue to be.

The inner purpose of Æschylus was entirely that of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Dante, and Milton, the presentment of the great problem of human life, the sense of an overruling Providence, the moral greatness and force of

the just man, the inevitable ruin and shame that awaits the unjust man in the end, the retribution that follows crime, the inheritance of evil, the triumph of virtue, courage, purity, and good faith. Whatever be the exact meaning of Aristotle's definition of the function of Tragedy that it was "to purify the soul by pity and terror," the sense of it is, to rouse the spirit and cleanse it from all that is sordid, selfish, torpid, and mean by touching our humane sympathies to the quick, by calling forth the dormant feelings of interest in our fellow-men, of pain at their sufferings, and enthusiasm in their heroism ; to stir the worldly self-contented spirit, fattened by comfort, ease, and enjoyment, to a consciousness of the tremendous issues for good and evil with which human life is surrounded ; to force the dull soul to see Retribution dogging the steps of injustice and crime and Ruin standing beside Prosperity and self-glorification—just as Death stands beside the rich and prosperous man in some mediæval Dance of Death. This was ever the aim of the great prophets and preachers. They too sought to purify the soul by pity and terror. It is the aim of the Vision of Ezekiel, of the cry of Isaiah.

"Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. . . . And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. . . . And the strong shall be as tow and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

That is the spirit of Æschylus in even grander imagery. There is nothing fanciful in thus identifying the aim of Æschylus with that of the preachers of the Hebrews, of the Middle Ages, of the Puritans and the Reformers. The drama which Æschylus founded in the highest moment of Greek history lasted on until the superstitions of mediæval fanaticism extinguished it with all the splendid creations of Polytheism in art. This drama absorbed the epos, the lyrics, the sententious poetry of Greece. It stood in the place of literature, of sacred books, almost of a priesthood. It soon lost its religious and much of its moral force, and degenerated into a literary amusement. But in the hands of Æschylus it was uniformly profound, wise, and religious, and reached a sublimity which this tragic art has never equalled since, and which, in the extinction of the mystical conceptions of the primitive world of free imagination, it may never reach again in equal dignity and power.

The comedy of the *Frogs* is the most typical product of the Attic mind and character, and undoubtedly is one of the most amazing triumphs of poetic wit in the entire history of literature. It was produced at Athens at the moment of her utmost strain and military exhaustion, just before her final annihilation as a dominant and imperial state. Never had she seemed more recklessly gay: absorbed in a trial, not of battle but of wits, rejoicing in the songs and sounds and sights of the country amidst the horrors of the crowded plague-stricken city. That was the hour when Aristophanes sought to relieve the gloom around his fellow-citizens by one of his brightest,



maddest, drollest phantasmagorias, of which the scene is Hades and the river Styx, and the principal player the tipsy god of the Dramatic festival.

As a poet, pure and simple, in the whole history of literature, no one except Shakespeare himself can be thought of as the rival of Aristophanes in versatility and range of spontaneous imagination. He is not the peer of Shakespeare, of course, in tragic power, nor of Æschylus, indeed ; nor in sustained vision of a higher world does he approach Dante, or Calderon, or Milton. But, in the magical combination of exquisite lyrics, riotous fancy, with immortal satire such as Rabelais, Swift, and Molière hardly reached, Aristophanes stands supreme. Shelley has no more ethereal pictures of the heavens above than we find in the Choruses of the *Frogs* and the *Clouds* ; Keats never sang the song of the nightingale with more luscious music ; Goethe never swept us more swiftly down into an underworld of phantoms or up into a dreamland of winged and superhuman spirits. But these are but incidents and by-play in the Attic comedy.

The real Aristophanes is on a larger and profounder plane of thought when he scourges the demagogue, reveals the mountebank in his impudent imposture, mocks at the pretender to wisdom, jeers the silly ambition of unsexed females, and denounces the public treason of oratorical windbags. This is the true Aristophanes, and in this, the essential work of great comedy, no one but Shakespeare can be put beside him in ancient or in modern times. Menander, Plautus, Terence were too local in their scene, and

belong to their special eras and people. Molière is too purely Parisian, too much the creature of the Grand Roi, as Cervantes is too purely Spanish and Renascence, Rabelais is too gross and ribald, and Swift too brutal and sardonic. No one of these has the dithyrambic audacity, the aerial music, and the wild laughter of Aristophanes; nor does any one, as he does, touch every nerve that quivers in the nature of man, nor speak, as he does, to all races and to all times.

Nay, I go further, for I hold the masterpiece of Aristophanes—the denunciation of Cleon’s demagogy—to be, as a triumph of wit and certainly of patriotic valour, even a bigger thing than Shakespeare’s masterpiece in Falstaff. The *Frogs*, the *Birds*, the *Clouds* have poetry equal to that of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* or the *Tempest*; but the great Assize of Tragedy, the Imperial Jingoism of Athenian ambition, the wordy scepticism of metaphysical sophistry, the unsexing of the New Woman—these are subjects of comic philosophy more eternal in their use, more deeply rooted in human nature than even the finest successes of our Tudor or Stuart comedy. No reasonable man to-day can justify Aristophanes’ outrages on decency, nor adopt his personal antipathies and party passions, but as I claim for Æschylus the first prize in the Tragedies of the World, so I claim for Aristophanes the first prize as the greatest of all comedians.

## GIBBON

(1894)

THE present year is the hundredth anniversary since the death of the greatest of all English historians. Edward Gibbon died in London, in January 1794, in his fifty-seventh year. His reputation has been so perfectly established since the appearance of the first volume of the *Decline and Fall* in 1776, it has been so unbroken, it is so continuously growing, that there is as little need for any formal commemoration of his achievement as there is for that of Shakespeare or Bacon. And his life was so simple, so transparent, and has been told by himself and by his friends with such ingenuous familiarity, that there would seem to be at first sight no occasion for any further research into his labours, or for any special revival of interest in his memory.

There are some circumstances, however, of a rather peculiar kind which make it a genuine concern of English literature to ask for some further light, to review what the great historian left at his premature death, and to bring his personality before the world ere the means of so doing shall have been effaced by time. The National Portrait Gallery (which has likenesses of Peg Woffington and of John Wilkes) has

no portrait at all of Edward Gibbon. The only recognised portraits are in private hands, and not accessible to the public. The house at Putney in which he was born, his house at Lausanne, the house in which he died, in St. James's Street, have all been destroyed. There is no record of him in our great burying-places, not even a bust or a tablet. The bones of Edward Gibbon lie in a vault of a small village church in Sussex, a spot with which, except by friendship, he himself had no kind of connection, and where he was merely an occasional visitor. Not one in a thousand, or in ten thousand, of his ardent admirers has ever stood beside his quiet grave, and few of them, perhaps, could say where his body has found rest. The public at large has never seen either portrait, bust, inscription, manuscript, relic, or any visible memento to recall to them the greatest historian of our language, or to give voice to the honour we all feel for one of the most signal triumphs of our literature. We cannot be said to have erred by any excess of hero-worship in the case of our great historian.

But there is something more than this, and that of a practical kind. Gibbon died before he had completed his fifty-seventh year. He was not worn out ; his mind had never been in such activity ; he still talked of his being " a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years." His great work had been completed more than six years before, he was still an indefatigable student, and was preparing his *Antiquities of the House of Brunswick*. Death suddenly cut short this busy career—an end largely due to neglect and imprudence—about a week after his return from his

friend's house in Sussex. He made this lifelong friend, John B. Holroyd, Lord Sheffield, his executor, who buried him in the Sheffield mausoleum in the church of Fletching, near East Grinstead in Sussex. Lord Sheffield was the possessor of the well-known portrait by Reynolds and that by Warton dated 1774, and stated by Lord Sheffield to be "by far the best likeness of him that exists." Lord Sheffield also had all Gibbon's manuscripts, his memoirs, essays, diaries and journals, materials for the *House of Brunswick*, and all his other letters. As is well known, Lord Sheffield issued two quarto volumes in 1796, containing the historian's miscellaneous works; and again, in 1814, he issued a second edition in five octavo volumes, with much additional matter. For what posthumous work of Gibbon's it possesses the world is exclusively indebted to Lord Sheffield, who had also portraits, manuscripts, correspondence, and every other relic of the great historian. He discharged his task with great diligence, discretion, and devotion to the memory of his friend.

Friendship—constant, pure, generous, and warm friendship—was the ennobling trait in Gibbon's far from heroic nature; and it formed the main beauty of his simple life. His love for his aunt, Catherine Porten, for his stepmother, for Deyverdun, for the Neckers, redeems his biography from commonplace. But, above all, his friendship with Lord Sheffield is a landmark in the history of literature in their age. Nothing is more natural or more honourable than Holroyd's devotion to his great friend's memory. He buried him in his own family tomb, carried off all his remains, edited his memoirs and correspondence, and

undertook a careful selection of his manuscripts, essays, and materials for publication. Lord Sheffield made himself more than the Boswell of Gibbon; he not only published his *Life* and remains, but he took effective care that no one else should ever intrude on his own labour of love, or add by one line to the Gibbon literature which he himself judged fit to entrust to the public eye.

This is not the case of a great writer having made his own selection of his writings, and forbidding publication of whatever he judged unworthy of his reputation. That veto ought, as a general rule, to be religiously respected—though few of us would go so far as to burn the manuscript of the *Æneid*. The detestable trick of publishing any scrap from a great man's pen that an editor can beg, borrow, or steal should be sternly suppressed. There is nothing of the kind here. Gibbon made no selection, put no veto on any publication. Within twenty hours of his death he talked of living for years, and evidently anticipated a new literary career and the completion of his second great work. The selection made of his remains, the veto upon any further publication, was the sole act of his friend, the first Lord Sheffield; and it is now a hundred years old. However judicious the choice, however proper the embargo, it cannot be held conclusive, without fresh examination, by posterity for evermore.

There is a strong, perhaps an unreasonable—often it is an unreasoned—prejudice against centenary commemorations in this country. But the practice of other nations, and the growing tendency of the public

mind, make something of the kind inevitable ; and they certainly have their convenience. The 'Services,' public officials, Society, and the world in general would greatly miss the suppression of birthdays, jubilees, and anniversaries of royal or public personages and great national events. A centenary is often a convenient occasion for doing some forgotten duty, recalling some fading memory, or repairing some public omission or default. And it is a public default that our national collections contain no likeness of the greatest historian of modern times, that our national monuments contain not a tablet to record his name, that his memory is not kept alive by a single object of any kind in any public place or museum, that not a single living scholar has ever had access to the mass of writings he left, which still remain sealed up in a country house.

There can be no need at the present day for any new eulogium upon Gibbon's work, nor any doubt as to his true place in the world's abiding literature. As the Athenian orator said : " When one is speaking to those who know, there is no occasion for a long harangue." The late Mr. Cotter Morison—who, after so much historical promise, was cut off prematurely—has given us in his admirable *Life of Gibbon* (English Men of Letters Series, 1878) an estimate of our great historian so just, so mature, so sympathetic, so enthusiastic, that it would be in vain to attempt to add to it. Mr. Morison has stated with decision and weight Gibbon's shortcomings and limitations, as well as his supreme merit. The *Decline and Fall* is not the work of a philosopher ; it is not altogether

scientific history ; it is not without very grave misjudgments. But it is a consummate work of art ; it unites vast learning with a perfect mastery of lucid narration, superb good sense with unfailing acumen, vivacious wit, and brilliant vitality that irradiates the whole enormous field.

The *Decline and Fall* is the most perfect *book* that English prose (outside its fiction) possesses, meaning by *book* a work perfect in design, *totus, teres, atque rotundus*, symmetrical, complete, final, and executed from beginning to end with the same mastery on one uniform plan. There is no other history extant which can be put beside it, if we reckon all the following qualities and conditions : (1) its immense field, both in extent of area and in epochs of time ; (2) its consummate concentration and grasp of view ; (3) its amazing range of learning and curious accuracy of detail ; (4) its pomp of movement and splendour of style. There have been before and since more subtle observers and more truly enlightened spirits. There have been historians quite as learned, who have made even fewer errors, and some who have written in a purer form. But no historian has ever combined all Gibbon's supreme gifts. And, accordingly, the *Decline and Fall* remains the type of the perfect literary history, just as the Zeus of Pheidias remained the type of the father of gods and men.

As Mr. Cotter Morison has so judiciously explained, Gibbon was the first to give to the world a complete history on the largest scale and with profound original research. And his subject is one so mighty, his scheme so vast, his execution so brilliant, that it still



remains in a class by itself—as yet unapproached, gaining by the efflux of time rather than losing in value. His true theme is the complex stormy evolution of the modern world out of the ancient world, the terrible and laboured transition from polytheism and slavery to monotheism and free industry. And this is the most critical and protracted transition in the annals of mankind. The geography of his subject embraces the old world from the Hebrides to the Indus, from the deserts of Tartary to the mountains of Atlas. His topic is the history of civilisation over thirteen centuries. And this vast canvas is filled without confusion, without effort, without discord, by one glowing, distinct, harmonious composition.

This is the supreme merit of Edward Gibbon, that he produced the first perfect literary history on a grand scale—one which still remains the most perfect we know. The only ancient history which in breadth of subject, epical splendour of imagination and beauty of narration, can be compared with his is the Roman history of Livy, of which, alas, we have only fragments. But we can hardly regard the delightful *chansons de gestes* of the glorious Augustan *improvisatore* as history in our sense of the term, for his whole soul turned to rhetorical effect and not to authentic record. But Gibbon fused the pomp and clang of Livy's epic with the conscientious veracity of Cæsar's *Memoirs*. Herodotus has a field as wide almost as Gibbon's, a spirit of inquiry as insatiable, and has painted certain great scenes with an even nobler art. But the Father of History was obviously

not equipped with the elaborate historical apparatus of a modern library ; and his ever fresh and fascinating muses do not group into an organic composition of the highest art. Each muse in turn takes up her favourite subject—legend, antiquities, voyages and travels, anecdotes, fairy tales, memoirs, and battle scenes—but their inexhaustible encyclopædia does not form one continuous epic. Gibbon has combined the epic unity of Livy with the infinite variety of Herodotus, the vivacity and portraiture of Plutarch, and the punctilious truthfulness of Cæsar. He combined the minute accuracy and vivid detail of the best *memoirs* with the vast survey and poetic transfiguration peculiar to the highest type of *history*. And he was the first, and the greatest, of those who have done this.

The true devotees of Gibbon are the foremost in restraining their admiration within due limits, and in frankly admitting the grave shortcomings of the master. No one has done this more thoroughly than Mr. Morison. He has abundantly shown that Gibbon is in no sense to be judged as a philosophic historian, that he was not a philosopher at all, that he did not penetrate into the deepest truths behind the record of events, that he sadly misjudged some things of prime importance. But in Gibbon's century the philosophy of history was in mere germ, and what are now the commonplaces of every student were truths concealed from them of old time. No one will pretend that Gibbon possessed the profound insight into the human mind of Thucydides, or of Tacitus, of Julius Cæsar ; we may add of De

Comines, of Bacon, or of Hume. He did not see as deeply behind the veil of the heart and of social movements as any of these. But of all these men, Hume alone wrote history on a really grand canvas, and, as we all know, Hume painted a great historical picture without "studying from the life" at all. He did all that a man of genius and a consummate writer could do with a very cursory knowledge of his facts. But Gibbon, though a great writer, was even greater in research. And though he was not a profound moralist, and wrote before such a science as sociology had been dreamed of, his task was very different from that of keen thinkers who meditate upon men and events of their own age, or on things that passed under the eyes of their own fathers and grandfathers. The writer of *history* has a very different task from that of the writer of *annals* or *memoirs*—and in many ways a much more difficult task.

Let us never pretend that Gibbon was a philosopher. Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Leibnitz, Hume, perhaps we may add Vico and Pascal, had yet deeper insight to follow the dynamics of society. Both Montesquieu and Hume, his immediate predecessors, stood on a totally superior level as social philosophers. With all their glaring misconceptions, prejudices, and blunders, even Bossuet, Voltaire, Condorcet, and Burke had a clearer vision into social evolution and the grand battle of ideas and manners than ever Gibbon attained in his fifty years of voracious historical study. Nor need we deny that some of Gibbon's own contemporaries wrote history more in the spirit of philosophy. Voltaire, with all his

perversity, was an even superior artist, and had a truer sense of the paramount mastery of ideas. And Robertson's *State of Europe* showed a sounder historical judgment than the *Decline and Fall*. Robertson's best work preceded Gibbon's by some ten or fifteen years; Voltaire's and Hume's both by some twenty-five or thirty years. So that Gibbon was certainly not the earliest real historian of the eighteenth century, and he was certainly by no means the most eminent social thinker. Yet, notwithstanding, given all these qualifications, he was the greatest literary historian.

He was essentially the consummate literary artist who transmutes mountains of exact research into a complex mass, glowing with life in all its parts, and glorious to contemplate as a whole. This is a literary, rather than a philosophical, feat; and as such it must be judged. Its art is akin to that of the epic poet who works out a grand plot in symmetrical order, with episodes, incidents, digressions, but on a consistent scheme, with beauty in each part and memorable form in each line. Now, it is beyond dispute that Gibbon's subject and scheme far transcend in breadth and importance to humanity those of any other historian, even those of Herodotus and Livy, Henri Martin, Grote or Milman, if we put aside such manuals as those of Heeren, Becker, Ranke, and Freeman. This is also beyond doubt, that no historian of ancient or modern times has ever shown the creative and formative imagination triumphing over such transcendent difficulties and working on so grand a scale. Carlyle's *French Revolution* is perhaps

a typical example of this power to infuse exact record with poetic vitality, but Carlyle's masterpiece gives us the story of five, or at most of twenty years, and of one country, or, rather, of one city. Gibbon's epic history is the story of mankind over the planet during thirteen centuries. And Gibbon's story is even more accurate, more brilliant, more organic, more truly a work of art than is Carlyle's.

And what vigour, what wit, what a clarion ring in every sentence from the first line of the first volume to the closing phrase of the last! How it holds the attention, how it leaves its imprint on the memory, how it conjures up scenes to the eye. It is like watching some interminable procession, as of a Roman triumph—some Cæsar returning from his Eastern victories, with warriors of all races, costumes, and colours, and the trophies of barbaric peoples, and the roar of many tribes, strange beasts, the pomp of war, and the spoils of cities. We need not insist that it is a perfect style, or a style without grave limitations or defects. It has not the lucid simplicity of Voltaire and of Hume, nor the grace of Addison, nor the pathos of Burke. It is too elaborate, too stiff with jewellery, and too uniform in texture. And perhaps these defects have induced the most versatile of living critics to put on record his memorable saying that he did not care for Gibbon except for his *Memoirs*. This is as if one said that he did not care for Shakespeare except for the *Sonnets*.

A famous authority on the beautiful was disappointed with the Atlantic; but we must not take these purists too literally. The Atlantic becomes

rather grandiose, and at last somewhat monotonous ; and so, Gibbon's interminable antithesis and unbending majesty do pall upon the constant reader, if he takes in too much at a sitting. But how splendid is the vigour, the point, the precision of the language ; and, with all its faults, how well fitted to rehearse these "strange stories of the deaths of kings," how akin to the theme and to the glowing scheme of the painter's colouring ! It is impossible to hurry through your Gibbon ; you cannot skip ; you cannot take in a description at a glance ; you cannot leave out the adjectives, or jump the second half of a clause. You may take up your *Decline and Fall*, of which you can repeat pages by heart ; you may have read it fifteen times, but the sixteenth reading will give you a phrase of which you had not previously caught the full sense, or throw light on something which has long been a puzzle. And how fixed in the memory are the quips and innuendos, the epigrams and the epithets, with which the page coruscates like a piece of jewellery. It may not be a pure style, it is certainly not a model style, but it is one that gives a gorgeous colour to a supremely organic composition.

Needless, too, now to enlarge on Gibbon's conscientious research, his wonderful accuracy, and the instinct which carries him sure-footed across the rotten and worthless rubbish whereon he had to tread. "That wonderful man monopolised," says Freeman, "the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation. . . . The encyclopædic history of 1300 years, as the grandest of historical designs, carried out alike with wonderful

power and with wonderful accuracy, must ever keep its place." This from the most scrupulously accurate of modern historians, who so seldom found anything accurate outside of the *Constitutional History of England*, is conclusive. The accuracy of Gibbon's work is only equalled by the vast range of his knowledge; and even this is surpassed by the grandeur of his design and the splendour of his handling. Such accuracy never before went with such brilliancy; such breadth of conception with such literary art. Thucydides, for all his consummate veracity, is often obscure, trivial, and sometimes tedious. Tacitus, with all his insight into character and mastery of phrase, remains always the Roman noble of cast-iron type and limited world. We no more expect critical exactness from Herodotus or Livy than we do from Homer or Virgil. The great painters of historical events are not supposed to be given to laborious research; the great memoir-writers are *ipso facto* confined to their own memory; and the profound antiquarians are almost invariably dull. But we take down our Gibbon time after time, knowing that we can turn up chapter and verse for every sentence, and yet are stirred and delighted by his pictures, as if it were a familiar poem or a work of fiction.

This need not debar us from admitting very serious defects in his work. His perverse misconception of Christianity, his cynical depreciation of its noblest chiefs, his incurable taste for scandal, his disbelief in heroism, in popular enthusiasm, in purity, in self-devotion, and his own epicurean, unromantic, aristo-

cratic habit of mind, very seriously blot his great work and cloud his own memory. Guizot, Milman, Michelet, Carlyle, Froude, Freeman, Green, have a far truer conception of the Middle Ages, the Crusades, of Feudalism and its great chiefs, of the Catholic Church and its services to civilisation, than has Gibbon. They are constantly right where he is wrong, and they tell us much of which he is quite uninformed. But, for all that, no one of these excellent men has given us a single work which can compare with the *Decline and Fall* in breadth, in knowledge, in unity of conception, and in splendour of form.

Let us, then, in the hundredth year after its author's death, lay a wreath upon his tomb, for we specially need to keep him as a type before us. The age is one of interminable specialism, colossal research, microscopic minuteness of examination; and our mountains of documents are become very Pelions upon Ossa. All this is right and necessary; and Gibbon was an accomplished specialist, a glutton of research; no man so microscopic, so minute, so documentary, in the true sense and in the right way. But then Edward Gibbon was much more. His gigantic accumulation of facts and indomitable accuracy were not the *ends* of his labour—but the *instruments*. Research was to him, like grammar or scholarship, not his title to honour, but his raw material for thought and creation. He did not discharge his note-books in a heap like bricks from the brickyard, and leave us to build them up into a house as we pleased. He built us the house, and did not ask us to come into it till it was perfect from



foundation to roof-ridge, ornamented, elaborated, habitable, and pleasant to dwell in. His teeming brain disdained the aqueous placidity with which Bavius flows on through one hundred mild and meandering chapters; his creative genius abhorred the rough-hewn masses of stone which year by year Mævius unloads upon us from a thousand quarries. When we grow weary of histories which are nothing but undigested note-books or copies from the dullest jottings of some contemporary memoir—histories without form, without mind, without imagination, without purpose, without beginning, middle or end—when we yearn for a book—for a man, an idea within the cover, then, for the tenth or the twentieth time, we take down the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and we have one of the greatest dramas of human civilisation, rehearsed with the ordered imagination of a poet and the monumental form of a consummate master of language.

## THE USE OF HISTORY

WHAT is the use of historical knowledge? Is an acquaintance with the events, the men, the ideas of the past, of any real use to us in these days—has it any practical bearing upon the happiness and conduct in life?

Two very different answers may be given to this question. The Gradgrinds and the Jack Cades assure us that there is no use at all. We are, they would say with Bacon, the mature age of the world; with us lies the gathered wisdom of ages. To waste our time in studying exploded fallacies, in reproducing worn-out forms of society, or in recalling men who were only conspicuous because they lived amidst a crowd of ignorant or benighted barbarians, is to wander from the path of progress, and to injure and not to improve our understandings.

On the other hand, the commonplace of literary gossip declares that history has fifty different uses. It is amusing to hear what curious things they did in bygone times. Then, again, it is very instructive as a study of character; we see in history the working of the human mind and will. Besides, it is necessary to avoid the blunders they committed in past days: there we collect a store of moral examples, and of political

maxims ; we learn to watch the signs of the times, and to be prepared for situations whenever they return. And it cannot be doubted, they add, that it is a branch of knowledge, and all knowledge is good. To know history, they conclude, is to be well-informed, is to be familiar with some of the finest examples of elegant and brilliant writing.

Between the two, those who tell us plainly that history is of no use, and those who tell us vaguely that history is of fifty uses, there is not much to choose. We must thoroughly disagree with them both, and of the two we would rather deal with the former. Their opposition, at any rate, is concentrated into a single point, and may be met by a single and a direct answer. To them we may say, Are you consistent ? Do you not in practice follow another course ? In rejecting all connection with the facts and ideas of the past, are you not cutting the ground from under your own feet ? Assume that you are an active politician and a staunch friend of the conservative or liberal party. What are the traditional principles of a party but a fraction, small, no doubt, but a sensible fraction, of history ? You believe in the cause of progress. Yet what is the cause of progress but the extension of that civilisation, of that change for the better which we have all witnessed or have learned to recognise as an established fact ? Your voice, if you are a politician and a democrat, is on the side of freedom. Well, but do you never appeal to Magna Charta, to the Bill of Rights, to the Reform Acts, to American Independence, or the French Revolution ? Or you are an imperialist, and you will suffer no outrage on the good name of

England. You are ready to cover the seas with armaments to uphold the national greatness. But what is the high name of England if it is not the memory of all the deeds by which, in peace or war, on sea or land, England has held her own amongst the foremost of the earth ?

Nor is it true that we show no honour to the men of the past, are not guided by their ideas, and do not dwell upon their lives, their work, and their characters. The most turbulent revolutionary that ever lived, the most bitter hater of the past, finds many to admire. It may be Cromwell, it may be Rousseau, or Voltaire, it may be Robert Owen, but some such leader each will have ; his memory he will revere, his influence he will admit, his principles he will contend for. Thus it will be in every sphere of active life. No serious politician can fail to recognise that, however strongly he repudiates antiquity, and rebels against the tyranny of custom, still he himself only acts freely and consistently when he is following the path trodden by earlier leaders, and is working with the current of the principles in which he throws himself, and in which he has confidence. For him, then, it is not true that he rejects all common purpose with what has gone before. It is a question only of selection and of degree. To some he clings, the rest he rejects. Some history he does study, and finds in it both profit and enjoyment.

Suppose such a man to be interested in any study whatever, either in promoting general education, or eager to acquire knowledge for himself. He will find, at every step he takes, that he is appealing to the authority of the past, is using the ideas of former ages,

and carrying out principles established by ancient, but not forgotten thinkers. If he studies geometry he will find that the first text-book put into his hand was written by a Greek two thousand years ago. If he takes up a grammar, he will be only repeating rules taught by Roman schoolmasters and professors. Or is he interested in art? He will find the same thing in a far greater degree. He goes to the British Museum, and he walks into a building which is a good imitation of a Greek temple. He goes to the Houses of Parliament to hear a debate, and he enters a building which is a bad imitation of a mediæval town-hall. Or, again, we know that he reads his Shakespeare and Milton; feels respect for the opinions of Bacon or of Hume, or Adam Smith. Such a man, the moment he takes a warm interest in anything—in politics, in education, in science, in art, or in social improvement—the moment that his intelligence is kindled, and his mind begins to work—that moment he is striving to throw himself into the stream of some previous human efforts, to identify himself with others, and to try to understand and to follow the path of future progress which has been traced out for him by the leaders of his own party or school. Therefore, such a man is not consistent when he says that history is of no use to him. He does direct his action by what he believes to be the course laid out before him; he does follow the guidance of certain teachers whom he respects.

We have then only to ask him on what grounds he rests his selection; why he chooses some and rejects all others; how he knows for certain that no other corner of the great field of history will reward the care of the

ploughman, or bring forth good seed. In spite of himself he will find himself surrounded in every act and thought of life by a power which is too strong for him. If he chooses simply to stagnate, he may, perhaps, dispense with any actual reference to the past ; but the moment he begins to act, to live, or to think, he must use the materials presented to him, and, so far as he is a member of a civilised community, so far as he is an Englishman, so far as he is a rational man, he can as little free himself from the influence of former generations as he can free himself from his personal identity ; unlearn all that he has learnt ; cease to be what his previous life has made him, and blot out of his memory all recollection whatever.

Let us suppose for a moment that any set of men could succeed in sweeping away from them all the influences of the past ages, and everything that they had not themselves discovered or produced. Suppose that all knowledge of the gradual steps of civilisation, of the slow process of perfecting the arts of life and the natural sciences, were blotted out ; suppose all memory of the efforts and struggles of earlier generations, and of the deeds of great men, were gone ; all the landmarks of history ; all that has distinguished each country, race, or city in past times from others ; all notion of what man had done, or could do ; of his many failures, of his successes, of his hopes ; suppose for a moment all the books, all the traditions, all the buildings of past ages to vanish off the face of the earth, and with them the institutions of society, all political forms, all principles of politics, all systems of thought, all daily customs, all familiar arts ; suppose

the most deep-rooted and most sacred of all our institutions gone; suppose that the family and home, property, and justice were strange ideas without meaning; that all the customs which surround us each from birth to death were blotted out; suppose a race of men whose minds, by a paralytic stroke of fate, had suddenly been deadened to every recollection, to whom the whole world was new,—can we imagine a condition of such utter helplessness, confusion, and misery?

Such a race might retain their old powers of mind and of activity, nay, both might be increased tenfold, and yet it would not profit them. Can we conceive such a race acting together, living together, for one hour? They would have everything to create. Would any two agree to adopt the same custom, and could they live without any? They would have all the arts, all the sciences to reconstruct anew; and even their tenfold intellect would not help them there. With minds of the highest order it would be impossible to think, for the world would present one vast chaos; even with the most amazing powers of activity, they would fall back exhausted from the task of reconstructing, reproducing everything around them. Had they the wisest of teachers or the highest social or moral purposes, they would all be lost and wasted in an interminable strife and continual difference; for family, town, property, society, country, nay, language itself, would be things which each would be left to create for himself, and each would create in a different manner. It would realise, indeed, the old fable of the tower of Babel; and the pride of self would culminate in confusion and dispersion. A

race with ten times the intellect, twenty times the powers, and fifty times the virtues of any race that ever lived on earth would end, within a generation, in a state of hopeless barbarism ; the earth would return to the days of primeval forests and swamps, and man descend almost to the level of the monkey and the beaver.

Now, if this be true, if we are so deeply indebted and so indissolubly bound to preceding ages. if all our hopes of the future depend on a sound understanding of the past, we cannot fancy any knowledge more important than the knowledge of the way in which this civilisation has been built up. If the destiny of our race, and the daily action of each of us, are so completely directed by it, the useful existence of each depends much upon a right estimate of that which has so constant an influence over him ; will be advanced as he works with the working of that civilisation, above him, and around him ; will be checked as he opposes it ; it depends upon this, that he mistakes none of the elements that go to make up that civilisation as a whole, and sees them in their due relation and harmony.

This brings us to that second class of objectors ; those who, far from denying the interest of the events of the past, far from seeing no use at all in their study, are only too ready in discovering a multitude of reasons for it, and at seeing in it a variety of incongruous purposes. If they suppose that it furnishes us with parallels when similar events occur, the answer is, that similar events never do and never can occur in history. The history of man offers one unbroken chain of constant change, in which no single situation



is ever reproduced. The story of the world is played out like a drama in many acts and scenes, not like successive games of chess, in which the pieces meet, combat, and manœuvre for a time, and then the board is cleared for another trial, and they are replaced in their original positions. Political maxims drawn crudely from history may do more harm than good. You may iustify anything by a pointed example in history. It will show you instances of triumphant tyranny and triumphant tyrannicide. You may find in it excuses for any act or any system. What is true of one country is wholly untrue of another. What led to a certain result in one age, leads to a wholly opposite result in another.

Then as to character, if the sole object of studying history is to see in it the workings of the human heart, that is far better studied in the fictitious creations of the great masters of character—in Shakespeare, in Molière, in Fielding, and Scott. Macbeth and Richard are as true to nature as any name in history, and give us an impression of desperate ambition more vivid than the tale of any despot in ancient or modern times. Besides, if we read history only to find in it picturesque incident or subtle shades of character, we run as much chance of stumbling on the worthless and the curious as the noble and the great. A Hamlet is a study in interest perhaps exceeding all others in fiction or in fact, but we shall hardly find that Hamlets have stamped their trace very deep in the history of mankind. There are few lives in all human story more romantic than that of Alcibiades, and none more base. Some minds find fascination in the Popish

plots of Titus Oates, where the interest centres round a dastardly ruffian. And the bullies, the fops, the cut-throats, and the Jezebels who crowded the courts of the Stuarts and the Georges, have been consigned to permanent infamy in libraries of learned and of brilliant works.

Brilliant and ingenious writing has been the bane of history ; it has degraded its purpose, and perverted many of its uses. Histories have been written which are little but minute pictures of scoundrelism and folly triumphant. Wretches, who if alive now would be consigned to the gallows or the hulks, have only to take, as it is said, a place in history, and generations after generations of learned men will pore over their lives, collect their letters, their portraits, or their books, search out every fact in their lives with prurient inquisitiveness, and chronicle their rascalities in twenty volumes. Such stories, some may say, have a human interest. So has the *Newgate Calendar* a human interest of a certain kind. Brilliant writing is a most delusive guide. In search of an effective subject for a telling picture, men have wandered into strange and dismal haunts. We none of us choose our friends on such a plan. Why, then, should we choose thus the friends round whom our recollections are to centre ? We none of us wish to be intimate with a man simply because he is a picturesque-looking villain, nor do we bring to our firesides men who have the reputation of being the loudest braggarts or keenest sharpers of their time.

Let us pass by untouched these memoirs of the unmemorable—these lives of those who never can be

said to have lived. Pass them all : these riotings, intrigues, and affectations of worthless men and worthless ages. Better to know nothing of the past than to know only its follies, though set forth in eloquent language and with attractive anecdote. It does not profit to know the names of all the kings that ever lived, and the catalogue of all their whims and vices, and a minute list of their particular weaknesses, with all their fools, buffoons, mistresses, and valets. Again, some odd incident becomes the subject of the labour of lives, and fills volume after volume of ingenious trifling. Some wretched little squabble is exhumed, unimportant in itself, unimportant for the persons that were engaged in it, trivial in its results. Lives are spent in raking up old letters to show why or how some parasite like Sir T. Overbury was murdered, or to unravel some plot about a maid of honour, or a diamond necklace, or some conspiracy to turn out a minister or to detect some court impostor. There are plenty of things to find out, or, if people are afflicted with a morbid curiosity, there are Chinese puzzles or chess problems left for them to solve, without ransacking the public records and libraries to discover which out of a nameless crowd was the most unmitigated scoundrel, or who it is that must have the credit of being the author of some peculiarly venomous or filthy pamphlet. Why need we have six immense volumes to prove to the world that you have found the villain, and ask them to read all about him, and explain in brilliant language how some deed of darkness or some deed of folly really was done ?

And they call this history. This serving up in spiced dishes of the clean and the unclean, the wholesome and the noxious ; this plunging down into the charnel-house of the great graveyard of the past, and stirring up the decaying carcasses of the outcasts and malefactors of the race. No good can come of such work : without plan, without purpose, without breadth of view, and without method ; with nothing but a vague desire to amuse, and a morbid craving for novelty. If there is one common purpose running through the whole history of the past, if that history is the story of man's growth in dignity, and power, and goodness, if the gathered knowledge and the gathered conscience of past ages does control us, support us, inspire us, then is this commemorating these parasites and offscourings of the human race worse than pedantry or folly. It is filling us with an unnatural contempt for the greatness of the past—nay, it is committing towards our spiritual forefathers the most unpardonable of offences. It is a kind of sacrilege to the memory of the great men to whom we owe all we prize, if we waste our lives in poring over the acts of the puny creatures who only encumbered *their* path.

Men on the battle-field or in the study, by the labour of their brains or of their hands, have given us what we have, and made us what we are ; a noble army who have done battle with barbarism and the powers of nature, martyrs often to their duty ; yet we are often invited to turn with indifference from the story of their long march and many victories, to find amusement amidst the very camp-followers and sutlers

who hang upon their rear. If history has any lessons, any unity, any plan, let us turn to it for this. Let this be our test of what is history and what is not, that it teaches us something of the advance of human progress, that it tells us of some of those mighty spirits who have left their mark on all time, that it shows us the nations of the earth woven together in one purpose, or is lit up with those great ideas and those great purposes which have kindled the conscience of mankind.

Why is knowledge of any kind useful? It is certainly not true that a knowledge of facts, merely as facts, is desirable. Facts are infinite, and it is not the millionth part of them that is worth knowing. What some people call the pure love of truth often means only a pure love of intellectual fussiness. A statement may be true, and yet wholly worthless. It cannot be all facts which are the subject of knowledge. For instance, a man might learn by heart the *Post-Office Directory*, and a very remarkable mental exercise it would be; but he would hardly venture to call himself a well-informed man. No; we want the facts only which add to our power, or will enable us to act. They only give us knowledge—they only are a part of education. For instance, we begin the study of mathematics; of algebra, or geometry. We hardly expect to turn it to practical account like another Hudibras, who could “tell the clock by algebra”; but we do not find Euclid’s geometry help us to take the shortest cut to our own house. Our object is to know something of the simplest principles which underlie all the sciences: to understand practically what mathematical demonstration means;

to bring home to our minds the conception of scientific axioms.

Again, we study some of the physical laws of nature—plain facts about gravitation, or heat, or light. What we want is to be able to know something of what our modern philosophers are talking about. We want to know why Faraday is a great teacher ; to know what it is which seems to affect all nature equally ; which brings us down heavily upon the earth if we stumble, and keeps the planets in their orbits. We want to understand what are laws of nature. We take up such pursuits as botany or geology ; but then, again, not in order to discover a new medicine, or a gold-field, or a coal-mine. No, we want to know something of the mystery around us. We see intelligible structure, consistent unity, and common laws in the earth on which we live, with the view, I presume, of feeling more at home in it, of becoming more attached to it, of living in it more happily. Some study physiology. We do not expect to discover the elixir of life, like an eminent novelist, nor do we expect to dispense with the aid of the surgeon. We want to get a glimpse of that marvellous framework of the human form, some notion of the laws of its existence, some idea of the powers which affect it, which depress or develop it, some knowledge of the relation of the thinking and feeling process and the thinking and feeling organ. We seek to know something of the influences to which all human nature is subject, to be able to understand what people mean when they tell us about laws of health, or laws of life, or laws of thought. We want to be in a position to

decide for ourselves as to the trustworthiness of men upon whose judgment we depend for bodily existence.

Now, in this list of the subjects of a rational education something is wanting. It is the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark :—

“ The proper study of mankind is man.”

Whilst Man is wanting, all the rest remains vague, and incomplete, and aimless. Mathematics would indeed be a jumble of figures if it ended in itself. But the moment we learn the influence which some great discovery has had on the destinies of man ; the moment we note how all human thought was lighted up when Galileo said that the sun, and not the earth, was the centre of our world ; the moment we feel that the demonstrations of Euclid are things in which all human minds must agree—indeed, are almost the only things in which all do agree,—that moment the science has a meaning, and a clue, and a plan. It had none so long as it was disconnected from the history and the destiny of man—the past and the future. It is the same with every other science. What would be the meaning of laws of nature, unless by them man could act on nature ? What would be the use of knowing the laws of health, unless we supposed that a sounder knowledge of them would ameliorate the condition of men ? What, indeed, is the use of the improvement of the mind ? It is far from obvious that mere exercise of the intellectual faculties alone is a good. A nation of Hamlets (to take a popular misconception of that character) would be more truly miserable, perhaps more truly despicable, than a nation of Bushmen. By a cultivated mind, a mental

training, a sound education, we mean a state of mind by which we shall become more clear of our condition, of our powers, of our duties towards our fellows, of our true happiness, by which we may make ourselves better citizens and better men—more civilised, in short. The preceding studies have been but a preparation. They have been only to strengthen the mind, and give it material for the true work of education—the inculcation of human duty.

All knowledge is imperfect, we may almost say meaningless, unless it tends to give us sounder notions of our human and social interests. What we need are clear principles about the moral nature of man as a social being ; about the elements of human society ; about the nature and capacities of the understanding. We want landmarks to guide us in our search after worthy guides, or true principles for social or political action. Human nature is unlike inorganic nature in this, that its varieties are greater, and that it shows continual change. The earth rolls round the sun in the same orbit now as in infinite ages past ; but man moves forward in a variable line of progress. Age after age develops into new phases. It is a study of life, of growth, of variety. One generation shows one faculty of human nature in a striking degree ; the next exhibits a different power. All, it is true, leave their mark upon all succeeding generations, and civilisation flows on like a vast river, gathering up the waters of its tributary streams. Hence it is that civilisation, being not a fixed or lifeless thing, cannot be studied as a fixed or lifeless subject. We can see it only in its movement and its



growth. Except for eclipses, some conjunctions of planets, and minor changes, one year is as good as another to the astronomer ; but it is not so to the political observer. He must watch successions, and a wide field, and compare a long series of events. Hence it is that in all political, all social, all human questions whatever, history is the main resource of the inquirer.

To know what is most really natural to man as a social being, man must be looked at as he appears in a succession of ages, and in very various conditions. To learn the strength or scope of all his capacities together, he must be judged in those successive periods in which each in turn was best brought out. Let no one suppose that he will find all the human institutions and faculties equally well developed, and all in their due proportion and order, by simply looking at the state of civilisation now actually around us. Is it not a monstrous assumption that this world of to-day, so full of misery and discontent, strife and despair, ringing with cries of pain and cries for aid, can really embody forth to us complete and harmonious man ? Are there no faculties within him yet fettered, no good instincts stifled, no high yearnings marred ? Have we in this year reached the pinnacle of human perfection, lost nothing that we once had, gained all that we can gain ? Surely, by the hopes within us, No ! But what is missing may often be seen in the history of the past. There, in the long struggle of man upwards, we may watch Humanity in various moods, and see some now forgotten power, capacity, or art yet destined to good service in the future. One by one we may light on the missing links in the

chain which connects all races and all ages in one, or gather up the broken threads that must yet be woven into the complex fabric of life.

There is another side on which history is still more necessary as a guide to consistent and rational action. We need to know not merely what the essential qualities of civilisation and of our social nature really are ; but we require to know the general course in which they are tending. The more closely we look at it, the more distinctly we see that progress moves in a clear and definite path ; the development of man is not a casual or arbitrary motion : it moves in a regular and consistent plan. Each part is unfolded in due order—the whole expanding like a single plant. More and more steadily we see each age working out the gifts of the last and transmitting its labours to the next. More and more certain is our sense of being strong only as we wisely use the materials and follow in the track provided by the efforts of mankind. Everything proves how completely that influence surrounds us. Take our material existence alone. The earth's surface has been made, as we know it, mainly by man. It would be uninhabitable by numbers but for the long labours of those who cleared its primeval forests, drained its swamps, first tilled its rank soil. All the inventions on which we depend for existence, the instruments we use, were slowly worked out by the necessities of man in the childhood of the race. We can only modify or add to these. We could not discard all existing machines and construct an entirely new set of industrial implements.

Take our political existence. There again we are

equally confined in limits. Our country as a political whole has been formed for us by a long series of wars, struggles, and common efforts. We could not refashion England, or divide it anew, if we tried for a century. Our great towns, our great roads, the local administrations of our counties, were sketched out for us by the Romans fifteen centuries since. Could we undo it if we tried, and make London a country village, or turn Birmingham into the metropolis? Some people think they could abolish some great institution, such as the House of Lords; but few reformers in this country have proposed to abolish the entire British Constitution. For centuries we endured an archaic law of real property. Such as it was, it was made for us by our feudal ancestors misreading Roman texts. Turn whichever way we will, we shall find our political systems, laws, and administrations to have been provided for us.

The same holds good even more strongly in all moral and intellectual questions. Are we to suppose that whilst our daily life, our industry, our laws, our customs, are controlled by the traditions and materials of the past, our thoughts, our habits of mind, our beliefs, our moral sense, our ideas of right and wrong, our hopes and aspirations, are not just as truly formed by the civilisation in which we have been reared? We are indeed able to transform it, to develop it, and to give it new life and action; but we can only do so as we understand it. Without this all efforts, reforms, and revolutions are in vain. A change is made, but a few years pass over, and all the old causes reappear. There was some unnoticed

power which was not touched, and it returns in full force. Take an instance from our own history. Cromwell and his Ironsides, who made the great English Revolution, swept away Monarchy, and Church, and Peers, and thought they were gone for ever. Their great chief dead, the old system returned like a tide, and ended in the orgies of Charles and James. The Catholic Church has been, as it is supposed, staggering in its last agonies now for many centuries. Luther believed he had crushed it. Long before his time it seemed nothing but a lifeless mass of corruption. Pope after Pope has been driven into exile. Four or five times has the Church seemed utterly crushed. And yet here in this nineteenth century, it puts forth all its old pretensions, and covers its old territory.

In the great French Revolution it seemed, for once, that all extant institutions had been swept away. That devouring fire seemed to have burnt the growth of ages to the very root. Yet a few years pass, and all reappear—Monarchy, Church, Peers, Jesuits, Empire, and Prætorian guards. Again and again they are overthrown. Again and again they rise in greater pomp and pride. They who, with courage, energy, and enthusiasm too seldom imitated, sixty years ago carried the Reform of Parliament and swept away with a strong hand abuse and privilege, believed that a new era was opening for their country. What would they think now? When they abolished rotten boroughs, and test acts, and curtailed expenditure, little did they think that sixty years would find their descendants wrangling about Church Establishments,

appealing to the House of Lords as a bulwark of freedom, and spending ninety millions a year. The experience of every one who was ever engaged in any public movement whatever reminds him that every step made in advance seems too often wrung back from him by some silent and unnoticed power ; he has felt enthusiasm give way to despair, and hopes become nothing but recollections.

What is this unseen power which seems to undo the best human efforts, as if it were some overbearing weight against which no man can long struggle ? What is this ever-acting force which seems to revive the dead, to restore what we destroy, to renew forgotten watchwords, exploded fallacies, discredited doctrines, and condemned institutions ; against which enthusiasm, intellect, truth, high purpose, and self-devotion seem to beat themselves to death in vain ? It is the Past. It is the accumulated wills and works of all mankind around us and before us. It is civilisation. It is that power which to understand is strength, which to repudiate is weakness. Let us not think that there can be any real progress made which is not based on a sound knowledge of the living institutions and the active wants of mankind. If we can only act on nature so far as we know its laws, we can only influence society so far as we understand its elements and ways. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that new principles of policy or social action can be created by themselves or can reconstruct society about us. Those rough maxims, which we are wont to dignify by the name of principles, may be, after all, only crude formulas and phrases without life or

power. Only when they have been tested, analysed, and compared with other phases of social life, can we be certain that they are immutable truths. Nothing but a thorough knowledge of the social system, based upon a regular study of its growth, can give us the power we require to affect it. For this end we need one thing above all—we need history.

It may be said—all this may be very useful for statesmen, or philosophers, or politicians; but what is the use of this to the bulk of the people? They are not engaged in solving political questions. The bulk of the people, if they are seeking to live the lives of rational and useful citizens, if they only wish to do their duty by their neighbours, are really and truly politicians. They are solving political problems, and are affecting society very deeply. A man does not need even to be a vestryman, he need not even have one out of the 500,000 votes for London, in order to exercise very great political influence. A man, provided he lives like an honest, thoughtful, truth-speaking citizen, is a power in the state. He is helping to form that which rules the state, which rules statesmen, and is above kings, parliaments, or ministers. He is forming *public opinion*. It is on this, a public opinion, wise, thoughtful, and consistent, that the destinies of our country rest, and not on acts of parliament, or movements, or institutions.

It is sheer presumption to attempt to remodel existing institutions, without the least knowledge how they were formed, or whence they grew; to deal with social questions without a thought how society arose; to construct a social creed without an idea or fifty

creeds which have risen and vanished before. Few men would, intentionally, attempt so much ; but many do it unconsciously. They think they are not statesmen, or teachers, or philosophers ; but, in one sense, they are. In all human affairs there is this peculiar quality. They are the work of the combined labours of many. No statesman or teacher can do anything alone. He must have the minds of those he is to guide prepared for him. They must concur, or he is powerless. In reality, he is but the expression of their united wills and thoughts. Hence it is, I say, that all men need, in some sense, the knowledge and the judgment of the statesman and the social teacher. Progress is but the result of our joint public opinion ; and for progress that opinion must be enlightened. "He only destroys who can replace." All other progress than this—one based on the union of many minds and purposes, and a true conception of the future and the past—is transitory and delusive. Those who defy this power, the man, the party, or the class who forget it, will be beating themselves in vain against a wall ; changing, but not improving ; moving, but not advancing ; rolling, as the poet says of a turbulent city, like a sick man on the restless bed of pain.

The value of a knowledge of history being admitted, there follows the complicated problem of how to acquire it. There are oceans of facts, mountains of books. This is the question before us. It is possible to know something of history without a pedantic erudition. Let a man ask himself always what he wants to know. Something of man's social nature ;

something of the growth of civilisation. He needs to understand something of the character of the great races and systems of mankind. Let him ask himself what the long ages of the early empires did for mankind ; whether they established or taught anything ; if fifty centuries of human skill, labour, and thought were wasted like an autumn leaf. Let him ask himself what the Greeks taught or discovered : why the Romans were a noble race, and how they printed their footmarks so deeply on the earth. Let him ask what was the original meaning and life of those great feudal institutions of chivalry and church, of which we see only the remnants. Let him ask what was the strength, the weakness, and the meaning of the great revolution of Cromwell, or the great revolution in France. A man may learn much true history, without any very ponderous books. Let him go to the museums and see the pictures, the statues, and buildings of Egyptian and Assyrian times, and try to learn what was the state of society under which men in the far East reached so high a pitch of industry, knowledge, and culture, three thousand years before our savage ancestors had learned to use the plough. A man may go to one of our Gothic cathedrals, and, seeing there the stupendous grandeur of its outline, the exquisite grace of its design, the solemn expression upon the faces of its old carved or painted saints, kings, and priests, may ask himself if the men who built that could be utterly barbarous, false-hearted, and tyrannical ; or if the power which could bring out such noble qualities of the human mind and heart must not have left its trace upon mankind.



It does not need many books to know something of the life of the past. A man who has mastered the lives in old Plutarch knows not a little of Greek and Roman history. A man who has caught the true spirit of the Middle Ages knows something of feudalism and chivalry. But is this enough? Far from it. These desultory thoughts must be connected. These need to be combined into a whole, and combined and used for a purpose. Above all, we must look on history as a whole, trying to find what each age and race has contributed to the common stock, and how and why each followed in its place. Looked at separately, all is confusion and contradiction: looked at as a whole, a common purpose appears. The history of the human race is the history of a growth. It can no more be taken to pieces than the human frame can be taken to pieces. Who would think of making anything of the body without knowing whether it possessed a circulation, a nervous system, or a skeleton? History is a living whole. If one organ be removed, it is nothing but a lifeless mass. What we have to find in it is the relation and connection of the parts. We must learn how age develops into age, how country reacts upon country, how thought inspires action, and action modifies thought.

Once conceive that all the greater periods of history have had a real and necessary part to fulfil in creating the whole, and we shall have done more to understand it than if we had studied some portion of it with a microscope. Once feel that all the parts are needed for the whole, and the difficulty of the mass of materials vanishes. We shall come to regard it as a composition

or a work of art which cannot be broken up into fragments at pleasure. We should as soon think of dividing it as of taking a figure out of a great picture, or a passage out of a piece of music. We all know those noble choruses of Handel, such as that "Unto us a child is born," and have heard the opening notes begin simple, subdued, and slow, until they are echoed back in deeper tones, choir answering choir, voice joining in with voice, growing fuller and stronger with new and varying bursts of melody, until the whole stream of song swells into one vast tide of harmony, and rolls on abounding, wave upon wave in majestic exultation and power. Something like this complex harmony is seen in the gathering parts of human history, age taking up the falling notes from age, race joining with race in answering strain, until the separate parts are mingled in one, and pour on in one movement together.

There is one mode in which history may be most easily, perhaps most usefully, approached. Let him who desires to find profit in it, begin by knowing something of the lives of great men. Not of those most talked about, not of names chosen at hazard; but of the real great ones who can be shown to have left their mark upon distant ages. Know their lives, not merely as interesting studies of character, or as persons seen in a drama, but as they represent and influence their age. Not for themselves only must we know them, but as the expression and types of all that is noblest around them. Let us know those whom all men cannot fail to recognise as great—the Cæsars, the Charlemagnes, the Alfreds, the Cromwells, great in

themselves, but greater as the centre of the efforts of thousands.

We have done much towards understanding the past when we have learned to value and to honour such men. It is almost better to know nothing of history than to know with the narrow coldness of a pedant a record which ought to fill us with emotion and reverence. Our closest friends, our earliest teachers, our parents themselves, are not more truly our benefactors than they. To them we owe what we prize most—country, freedom, peace, knowledge, art, thought, and higher sense of right and wrong. What a tale of patience, courage, sacrifice, and martyrdom is the history of human progress! It affects us as if we were reading in the diary of a parent the record of his struggles for his children. For us they toiled, endured, bled, and died; that we by their labour might have rest, by their thoughts might know, by their death might live happily. For whom did these men work, if not for us? Not for themselves, when they gave up peace, honour, life, reputation itself—as when the great French republican exclaimed, “May my name be accursed, so that France be free!” not for themselves they worked, but for their cause, for their fellows, for us. Not that they might have fame, but that they might leave the world better than they found it. This supported Milton in his old age, blind, poor, and dishonoured, when he poured out his spirit in solitude, full of grace, tenderness, and hope, amidst the ruin of all he loved and the obscene triumph of all he despised. It supported Dante, the poet of Florence, when an outlaw and an exile he was cast off

by friends and countrymen, and wandered about begging his bread from city to city, pondering the great thoughts which live throughout all Europe. This spirit, too, was in one, the noblest victim of the French Revolution, the philosopher Condorcet ; who, condemned, hunted to death, devoted the last few days of his life to serene thought of the past, and, whilst the pursuers were on his track, wrote in his hiding-place that noble sketch of the progress of the human race.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE stormy antipathies of Thomas Carlyle have to answer for many a miscarriage of historical justice ; but for none more unfounded than that superior air with which he teaches the nineteenth century to sit in judgment on the eighteenth. " The age of prose, of lying, of sham," said he, " the fraudulent-bankrupt century, the reign of Beelzebub, the peculiar era of Cant." And so growls on our Teufelsdröckh through thirty octavo volumes, from the first philosophy of clothes to the last hour of Friedrich.

Invectives against a century are even more unprofitable than indictments against a nation. We are prepared for them in theology, but they have quite gone out of serious history. Whatever else it may be, we may take it that the nineteenth century is the product of the eighteenth, as that was in turn the product of the seventeenth ; and if the Prince of Darkness had so lately a hundred years of rule in Europe, to what fortunate event do we owe our own deliverance, and, indeed, the nativity of Thomas Carlyle ? But surely invectives were never more out of place than when hurled at a century which was simply the turning epoch of the modern world, the age which gave birth to the movements wherein we

live, and to all the tasks that we yet labour to solve. Look at the eighteenth century on all sides of its manifold life, free the mind from that lotty pity with which prosperous folk are apt to remember their grandfathers, and we shall find it in achievement the equal of any century since the Middle Ages; in promise and suggestion and preparation, the century which most deeply concerns ourselves.

Though Carlyle seems to count it the sole merit of the eighteenth century to have provided us the French Revolution (the most glorious bonfire recorded in profane history), it is not a little curious that almost all his heroes in modern times, apart from Oliver Cromwell, are children and representatives of that unspeakable epoch. Such were Friedrich, Mirabeau and Danton, George Washington, Samuel Johnson and Robert Burns, Watt and Arkwright; and, for more than half of the century, and for more than half his work, so was Goethe himself. It sounds strange to accuse of unmitigated grossness and quackery the age which gave us these men; and which produced, beside, *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, and the lines 'To Mary' and 'To my Mother's Picture,' Berkeley's Dialogues and Burke's Addresses, Reynolds and Gainsborough, Flaxman and Stothard, Handel and Mozart. But one remembers that according to the Teufelsdröckhian cosmogony, great men are dropped *ab extra* into their age, much as some philosophers assure us that protoplasm, or the primitive germ of life, was casually dropped upon our planet by a truant aerolite.

A century which opens with the *Rape of the Lock* and closes with the first part of *Faust*, is hardly a century of mere prose, especially if we throw in Gray, Cowper, and Burns, the *Ancient Mariner* and the *Lyrical Ballads*. A century which includes twenty years of the life of Newton, twenty-three of Wren and sixteen of Leibnitz, and the whole lives of Hume, Kant, Adam Smith, Gibbon, and Priestley, is not the age of mere shallowness ; nor is the century which founded the monarchy of Prussia and the Empire of Britain, which gave birth to the Republic in America and then in France, and which finally recast modern society and formed our actual habits, the peculiar era of quackeries, bonfires, and suicides. Measure it justly by the light of scientific history, and not by the tropes of some Biblical Saga, and it holds its own beside the greatest epochs in the modern world ; of all modern eras perhaps the richest, most various, most creative. It raised to the rank of sciences, chemistry, botany, and zoology ; it created the conception of social science and laid its foundations ; it produced the historical schools and the economic schools of England and of France ; the new Metaphysic of Germany, the new Music of Germany ; it gave birth to the new poetic movement in England, to the new romance literature of England and of France, to the true prose literature of Europe ; it transformed material life by manifold inventions and arts ; it transformed social life no less than political life ; it found modern civilisation in a military phase, it left it in an industrial phase ; it found modern Europe fatigued, oppressed with worn-out forms,

uneasy with the old life, uncertain and hopeless about the new ; it left modern Europe recast without and animated with a new soul within ; burning with life, hope, and energy.

The habit of treating a century as an organic whole, with a character of its own, is the beaten pathway to superficial comparison. History, after all, is not grouped into natural periods of one hundred years, as different from each other as the life of the son from that of his father. Nor, whatever the makers of chronologies may say, does mankind really turn over a new page in the great Record, so soon as the period of one hundred years is complete. The genius of any time, even though it be in a single country, even in one city, is a thing too marvellously complex to be hit off by epithets from the Minor Prophets or Gargantuan anathemas and nicknames. And as men are not born at the beginning of a century, and do not die at the end of it, but grow, flourish, and decay year by year and hour by hour, we are ever entering on a new epoch and completing an old one, did we but know it, on the first day of every year we live, nay, at the rising and the setting of every sun.

But, though a century be an arbitrary period, as purely conventional as a yard or a mile, and though every century has a hundred characters of its own, and as many lives and as many results, we must for convenience take note of conventional limits, and fix our attention on special features as the true physiognomy of an epoch. History altogether is a wilderness, till we parcel it out into sections more or less arbitrary, choosing some class of facts out of the



myriads that stand recorded, steadily turning our eyes from those which do not concern our immediate purpose. And so, we can think of a century as in some sort of a definite whole, in some sense inspired with a definite spirit, and leading to a set of definite results. And we are quite right in so doing, provided we keep a watchful and balanced mind, in no mechanical way, and in no rhetorical or moralising mood, but in order to find what is general, dominant, and central.

If we seek for some note to mark off the eighteenth from all other centuries we shall find it in this: it was the time of 'final maturing for the great Revolution in Europe, the mightiest change in all human history. By revolution we mean, not the blood-stained explosion and struggle in France which was little but one of its symptoms and incidents, but rather that resettlement of modern life common to all parts of the civilised world; which was at once religious, intellectual, scientific, social, moral, political, and industrial; a resettlement whereon the whole fabric of human society in the future is destined to rest. The era as a whole (so far from being trivial, sceptical, fraudulent, or suicidal) was, in all its central and highest moments, an era of hope, enterprise, industry, and humanity; full of humane eagerness for improvement, trusting human nature, and earnestly bent on human good. It sadly miscalculated the difficulties and risks, and it strangely undervalued the problems it attempted to solve with so light a heart. Instead of being really the decrepit impostor amongst the ages, it was rather the *naïf* and confident youngster. The work of political reformation on which it engaged in

a spirit of artless benevolence brought down on its head a terrible rebuff ; and it left us thereby a heritage of confusion and strife. But the hurly-burly at Versailles and the Reign of Terror are no more the essence of the eighteenth century, than the Irish disorders and the Commune of Paris are the essence of the nineteenth. Political chaos, rebellions, and wars are at most but a part of a century's activity, and sometimes indeed but a small part.

In the core, the epoch was hearty, manly, humane ; second to none in energy, mental, practical, and social ; full of sense, work, and good fellowship. Its manliness often fattened into grossness ; soon to show new touches of exquisite tenderness. Its genius for enterprise plunged it into changes, and prepared for us evils which it little foresaw. But the work was all undertaken in genuine zeal for the improvement of human life. If its poetry was not of the highest of all orders, the century created a new order of poetry. If its art was on the whole below the average, in the noble art of music it was certainly supreme. In philosophy, science, moral and religious truth, it was second to none that went before. In politics it ended in a most portentous catastrophe. But the very catastrophe resulted from its passion for truth and reform. Nor is it easy for us now to see how the catastrophe could have been avoided, even if we see our way to avoid such catastrophes again. And in such a cause it was better to fail in striving after the good than to perish by acquiescing in the evil. If one had to give it a name, I would rather call it the *humane* age (in spite of revolutions, wars, and fashion-

able corruption) ; for it was the era when humanity first distinctly perceived the possibilities and conditions of mature human existence.

It would be easy enough to find scores of names, facts, and events to the contrary of all this ; but it would be quite as easy to find scores to the contrary of any opinion about any epoch. A century is a mass of contradictions by the necessity of the case ; for it is made up of every element to be found in human nature. The various incidents are in no way to be overlooked ; neither are they to be exaggerated. To balance the qualities of an epoch, we must analyse them all separately, compare them one by one, and then find the centre of gravity of the mass. England will concern us in the main ; but the spirit of the age can never be strictly confined to its action in any one country. Such movements as the Renaissance in the sixteenth, or the Revolution in the eighteenth century, are especially common to Europe. It would be impossible to understand the eighteenth century in England, if we wholly shut our eyes to the movements abroad of which the English phase was the reflex and organ. Nor must we forget how much our judgment of the eighteenth century is warped (it is obvious that Carlyle's was entirely formed) by literary standards and impressions. Literature has been deluged with the affectations, intrigues, savagery, and uncleanness of the eighteenth century. Other centuries had all this in at least equal degree ; but the eighteenth was the first to display it in pungent literary form. Industry, science, invention, and benevolence were less tempting fields for these

brilliant penmen. And thus an inordinate share of attention is given to the quarrels of poets, the vices of Courts, and the grimacing of fops. It is the business of serious history to correct the impression which torrents of smart writing have left on the popular mind.

We are all rather prone to dwell on the follies and vices of that era, with which we are more familiar than we are with any other, almost more than we are with our own. It is the first age, since that of Augustus, which ever left inimitable pictures of its own daily home existence. We recall to mind so easily the ladies of quality at the Spectator's routs, the rioters and intriguers of Hervey's memoirs, and of Walpole's, and of 'the little Burney's'; the Squire Westerns, the Wilkeses, and the Queensberrys; the Hell-fire clubs and the Rake's Progresses; the political invectives of Junius and Burke; the Courts of St. James' and Versailles; the prisons, the assizes, the parties of pleasure to Bedlam and to Bridewell; the Wells at Tunbridge, Bath, and Epsom; the masquerades at Vauxhall and Ranelagh; the taverns, the streets, the Mohawks, and the duellists; the gin-drinking and the bull-baiting, the gambling and the swindling; and a thousand pictures of social life by a crowd of consummate artists. Perhaps we study these piquant miniatures with too lively a gust. The question is not whether such things were, but what else there was also. The pure, the tender, the just, the merciful, is there as well, patiently toiling in the even tenor of its way; and if we look for it honestly, we shall find it a deeper, wider, more effective force in the main, shaping the issue in the end for good.

Addison and Steele were not the greatest of teachers, but they have mingled with banter about fans and monsters something deeper and finer, such as none had touched before, something of which six generations of moralists have never given us the like. "To have loved her was a liberal education." Is there a nobler or profounder sentence in our language? It is a phrase to dignify a nation, and to purify an age; yet it was flung off by 'poor Dick,' one of the gayest wits, for one of the lightest hours of a most artificial society. Western, be it never forgotten, was the name not only of a boisterous fox-hunter, but of the most lovable woman in English fiction. What a mass of manly stuff does our English soil seem to breed as we call up the creations of Fielding! What homes of sturdy vigour do we enter as we turn over the pages of Defoe, and Swift, and Smollett, and Goldsmith, and Johnson; or again in the songs of Burns, or the monotonous lines of Crabbe; or in such glimpses of English firesides as we catch in the young life of Miss Edgeworth, or in our old friend *Sandford and Merton*, or the record of Scott's early years, or the life of Adam Smith, or Bishop Berkeley! What a world of hardihood and patience is there in the lives of Captain Cook, and Watt, Brindley, and Arkwright, Metcalfe, and Wedgwood! What spiritual tenderness in the letters of Cowper, and the memoirs of Wesley, Howard, Wilberforce, and scores of hard workers, just spirits and faithful hearts who were the very breath and pulse of the eighteenth century! What a breeze from the uplands plays round those rustic images in all forms of art; the art often thin and

tame itself, but the spirit like the fragrance of new hay ; in such paintings as Morland's, or such poems as Thomson's, Beattie's, and Somerville's, or such prose as Fielding's, Goldsmith's, and Smollett's !

How jocund did they drive their team afield !

How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

If, turning from that mass of toiling, daring, hearty, simple life, we think overmuch of the riot of Fashion and the gossip of Courts, the fault is perhaps with those who look to Fashion for the keynote, and care more for crowds than they care for homes.

A century is never, we have said, a really organic whole, but a group of various movements taken up and broken off at two arbitrary points. The eighteenth is as little a whole as any other ; but we may group it into parts in some degree thus. The first ten or fifteen years are clearly more akin to the seventeenth century than the eighteenth. Locke, Newton, and Leibnitz ; Wallis and Wren ; Burnet and Somers ; James II., Louis XIV., and William III. ; Bossuet and Fénelon, lived into the century, and Dryden lived up to it—but none of these belong to it. As in French history it is best to take the age of Louis by itself, so in English history it is best to take the Whig Revolution by itself ; for Anne is not easily parted from her sister, nor is Marlborough to be severed from William and Portland. In every sense the reign of Anne was the issue and crown of the movement of 1688, and not the forerunner of that of 1789. For all practical purposes, the eighteenth century in England means the reigns of the first three Georges. This

space we must group into three periods of unequal length:—

1. From the accession of the House of Hanover (1714) down to the fall of Walpole (1742). This is the age of Bolingbroke and Walpole; Swift, Defoe, Pope, Addison, Steele, Bishop Berkeley, and Bishop Butler, Halley, Stephen Gray, and Bradley.

2. From the fall of Walpole (1742) to the opening of the French Revolution (1789). It is the age of Chatham, of Frederick, Washington, and Turgot; of Wolfe, Clive, and Hastings, Rodney, and Anson; of Gibbon and Robertson; of Hume and Adam Smith; of Kant, Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau; of Richardson and Fielding, Sterne and Smollett, Johnson and Goldsmith; of Cowper and Gray, Thomson and Beattie; of Reynolds and Gainsborough, Hogarth and Garrick; of Cook, Watt, Arkwright, Brindley, Herschel, Black, Priestley, Hunter, Franklin, and Cavendish; of Handel, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart; of Wesley, Whitefield, Howard, and Raikes.

This is the central typical period of the eighteenth century, with a note of its own; some fifty years of energy, thought, research, adventure, invention, industry; of good fellowship, a zest for life, and a sense of humanity.

3. Lastly, come some twelve years of the Revolution (1789-1801); a mere fragment of a larger movement that cannot be limited to any country or any century; the passion and the strife, the hope and the foreshadowing of things that were to come and things that are not come. It is the age of Pitt, Fox, Burke, and Grattan; of Cornwallis and Nelson; of

Bentham and Romilly, Wilberforce and Clarkson ; of Goethe and Burns, Coleridge and Wordsworth ; of Telford and Stevenson ; of Flaxman, Bewick, Romney, and Stothard ; the youth of Sir H. Davy, Scott, Beethoven, and Turner ; the boyhood of Byron and Shelley.

It is impossible to omit this critical period of the century, though we too often forget that it forms an integral part of it, quite as truly as the age of Pope or the age of Johnson. The century is not intelligible if we cast out of it the mighty crisis in which it ended, to which it was leading all along ; or if we talk of that New Birth as a bonfire or a suicide. Even in art we are apt to forget that it was the century of Pope and Johnson that gave us *Faust*, the *Ancient Mariner*, *The Task*, the *Lyrical Ballads*, Flaxman, Stothard's and Blake's delicate and weird fancies, Turner's first manner, Beethoven's early sonatas, and Scott's translations from the German. All that we value as specially distinctive of our age lay in embryo in many a quiet home, whilst the struggle raged at its hottest on the banks of the Seine, or on the Rhine, the Po, and the Nile.

When the eighteenth century opened, the supremacy in Europe belonged to England, as it has hardly ever belonged before or since. In William III. she had one of the greatest and most successful of all modern statesmen, the one great ruler she ever had since Cromwell. The Revolution of 1688 had placed her in the van of freedom, industry, and thought. Her armies were led by one of the most consummate soldiers in modern history. Her greatest genius in



science, her greatest genius in architecture, and one of her wisest spirits in philosophy, were in full possession of their powers; 'glorious John,' the recognised chief of the Restoration poets, was but just dead, and his young rival was beginning to unfold his yet more consummate mastery of rhyme. The founders of English prose were equipping our literature with a new arm, the easy and flexible style of modern prose; Swift, Addison, and Defoe were the first to show its boundless resources, nor has any improvement been added to their art. The nation was full of energy, wealth, and ambition; and it still glowed with the sense of freedom, with all that it shook off in the train of the Stuarts.

We should count the last days of William and the whole reign of Anne rather with the Revolution of 1688, of which they were the fruit, than with the Hanoverian period, for which they paved the way. And thus we may pass the campaigns of Churchill, and the overthrow of Louis, and all else that was the sequel and corollary of the struggle with the Stuarts. On the other hand, when we reach the close of the century, England is struggling with a movement which she had only indirectly created, but which she was equally unable to develop or to guide. The characteristic period of the eighteenth century for England is that between the death of Anne and the great war with the Republic (1714-1793). The first fourteen years of the century belong to the history of the English Revolution: the last years to the history of the French Revolution. The eighty years of comparative non-intervention and rest are for

Englishmen at least the typical years of the eighteenth century.

It was an era of peace, as to Europe our first era of systematic peace. In spite of Fontenoy and Minden, Belleisle and Quiberon Bay, it was the first period in our history where the internal welfare of the nation took recognised place before the interests of the dynasty, and its prestige in Europe. The industrial prosperity of the nation, and the supreme authority of Parliament, were made, for the first time in our history, the guiding canons of the statesman. Walpole is the statesman of the eighteenth century ; a statesman of a solid, albeit a somewhat vulgar type. If history were the digest of pungent anecdote, it would be easy to multiply epigrams about the corruption of Walpole. Yet, however unworthy his method, or gross his nature, Robert Walpole created the modern statesmanship of England. The imperial Chatham in one sense developed, in another sense distorted the policy of Walpole ; much as the First Consul developed and distorted the revolutionary defence of France. And so the early career of William Pitt was a mere prolongation of the system of Walpole : purer in method, and more scientific in aim, but less efficient in result. Alas ! after ten glorious years as the minister of peace and of reform, Pitt's career and his very nature were transformed by that aristocratic panic which made him the unwilling instrument of reaction. But Walpole has left a name that is a symbol of peace, as that of Chatham and of Pitt is a symbol of war. And thus Walpole remains, with all his imperfections on his head, the veritable founder

of our industrial statesmanship, the parliamentary father of Fox, of Peel, of Cobden, of Gladstone.

That industrial organisation of peace by means of a parliamentary government was the true work of our eighteenth century ; for the European triumphs of Anne should be counted amongst the fruits of the heroic genius of William, and the Crusade of Pitt against the Republic should be counted as a backward step of reactionary panic. It was not well done by the statesmen of peace, that industrial organisation of England ; it was most corruptly and ignobly done : but it was done. And it ended (we must admit) in a monstrous perversion. The expansion of wealth and industry, which the peace-policy of Walpole begot, stimulated the nation to seek new outlets abroad, and led to the conquest of a vast Empire. When the eighteenth century opened, the King of England ruled, outside of these islands, over some two or three millions at the most. When the nineteenth century opened, these two or three had become at least a hundred millions. The colonies and settlements in America and in Australia, the maritime dependencies, the Indies East and West, were mainly added to the Crown during the eighteenth century, and chiefly by the imperial policy of Chatham. So far as they were a genuine expansion of our industrial life, they are a permanent honour of the age ; so far as they are the prizes of ambitious adventure, they were the reversal of the system of Walpole. It was Chatham, says his bombastic monument in the Guildhall, who made commerce to flourish by war. It is an ignoble epitaph, though Burke himself composed it. But for good or

for evil, it was the policy and the age of the two Pitts which gave England her gigantic colonial and maritime Empire. And whether it be her strength and glory as many think it, or her weakness and burden as I hold it, it was assuredly one of the most momentous crises in the whole of our history.

A change, at least as momentous, was effected at home from within. The latter half of the eighteenth century converted our people from a rural to a town population, made this essentially a manufacturing, not an agricultural country, and established the factory system. No industrial revolution so sudden and so thorough can be found in the history of our island. If we put this transformation of active life beside the formation of the Empire beyond the seas, we shall find England swung round into a new world, as, in so short a time, has hardly ever befallen a nation. The change which in three generations has trebled our population, and made the old kingdom the mere heart of a huge Empire, led to portentous consequences, both moral and material, which were hardly understood till our own day. It is the singular boast of the nineteenth century to have covered this island with vast tracts of continuous cities and works, factories and pits ; but it was the eighteenth century which made this possible. Appalling as are many of the forms which the fabulous expansion of industry has taken to-day, it is too late now to deplore or resist it. The best hours of the twentieth century, we all trust, will be given to reform the industrial extravagances of the nineteenth century ; but it will be possible only on condition of accepting the industrial

revolution which the eighteenth century brought about.

Whatever be the issue of this great change in English life, there can be no question about the sterling qualities of the men to whose genius and energy it was due. The whole history of the English race has no richer page than that which records those hardy mariners who with Cook and Anson girdled the globe; the inventors and workers who made the roads and the canals, the docks and the lighthouses, the furnaces and the mines, the machines and the engines; the art-potters like Wedgwood, inspired spinners like Crompton, roadmakers like the blind Metcalfe, engineers like Smeaton, discoverers like Watt, canalmakers like Bridgewater and Brindley, engravers like Bewick, opticians like Dollond, inventors like Arkwright. Let us follow these men into their homes and their workshops, watch their lives of indefatigable toil, of quenchless vision into things beyond, let us consider their patience, self-denial, and faith before we call their age of all others that of quackery, bankruptcy, and fraud. We may believe it rather the age of science, industry, and invention.

A striking feature of those times was the dispersion of intellectual activity in many local centres, though the entire population of the island was hardly twice that of London to-day. Birmingham, Manchester, Derby, Bristol, Norwich, Leeds, Newcastle, and other towns were potent sources of science, art, and culture, and all the more vigorous that they depended little on the capital. A hundred years ago

in population and extent Birmingham was hardly one hundredth part of what it is now. But what a wealth of industry, courage, science, and genius in that quiet Midland village lay grouped round Dr. Darwin and his Lunar Society ; with James Watt and Matthew Boulton, then at work on their steam-engine, and Murdock, the inventor of gas-lighting ; and Wedgwood, the father of the Potteries ; and Hutton the bookseller, and Baskerville the printer, and Thomas Day, and Lovell Edgeworth ; a group to whom often came Franklin, and Smeaton, and Black, and in their centre their great philosopher and guide and moving spirit, the noble Joseph Priestley. Little as we think of it now, that group, where the indomitable Boulton kept open house, was a place of pilgrimage to the ardent minds of Europe ; it was one of the intellectual cradles of modern civilisation. And it is interesting to remember that our great Charles Darwin is on both sides the grandson of men who were leading members of that Lunar Society, itself a provincial Royal Society. What forces lay within it ! What a giant was Watt, fit to stand beside Gutemberg and Columbus, as one of the few whose single discoveries have changed the course of human civilisation ! And, if we choose one man as a type of the intellectual energy of the century, we could hardly find a better than Joseph Priestley, though his was not the greatest mind of the century. His versatility, eagerness, activity, and humanity ; the immense range of his curiosity, in all things physical, moral, or social ; his place in science, in theology, in philosophy, and in politics ; his peculiar relation to the Revolution, and

the pathetic story of his unmerited sufferings, may make him the hero of the eighteenth century.

The strength of the century lay neither in politics nor in art ; it lay in breadth of understanding. In political genius, in poetry, in art, the eighteenth was inferior to the seventeenth century, and also to the sixteenth ; in moral, in social, and in material development it was far inferior to the nineteenth. But in philosophy, in science, in mental versatility, it has hardly any equal in the ages. Here, especially, it is impossible to limit the view to one country. Politics, industry, and art are local. Science and research know nothing of country, have no limitations of tongue, race, or government. In philosophy then the century numbers—Leibnitz, Vico, Berkeley, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Kant, Turgot, Hume, Adam Smith. In science, it counts Buffon, Linnæus, Lavoisier, Laplace, Lamarck, Lagrange, Halley, Herschel, Franklin, Priestley, Black, Cavendish, Volta, Galvani, Bichat, and Hunter. To interpret its ideas, it had such masters of speech as Voltaire, Rousseau, Swift, Johnson, Gibbon, Lessing, Goethe, and Burke. It organised into sciences (crystallising the data till then held in solution) physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, comparative anatomy, electricity, psychology, and the elements of social science, both in history and in statics. It threw up these three dominant movements : (1) the idea of law in mind and in society, that is, the first postulate of mental and social science ; (2) that genius for synthesis of which the work of Buffon, of Linnæus, and the *Encyclopædia* itself, were all phases ; (3) that idea of

social reconstruction, of which the New System of '89, the American Republic, and our reformed Parliament are all products. The seventeenth century can show perhaps a list of greater separate names, if we add those in poetry, politics, and art. But for mass, result, multiplicity, and organic power, it may be doubted if any century in modern history has more to show than the eighteenth.

There is this stamp upon every stroke of eighteenth-century work : the habit of regarding things as wholes, bearing on life as a whole. Their thirst for knowledge is a practical, organic, working thing ; their minds grasp a subject all round, to turn it to a useful end. The encyclopædic spirit animates all : with a genius for clearness, comprehension, and arrangement. It was for the most part somewhat premature, often impatient, at times shallow, as was much of the work of Voltaire, Diderot, Johnson, and Goldsmith. But the slightest word of such men has to my ear a human ring, a living voice that I recognise as familiar. It awakens me, and I am conscious of being face to face with an interpreter of humanity to men. When they write histories whole centuries glow with life ; we see and we hear the mighty tramp of ages. In twelve moderate octavos, through all which not a sentence could belong to any other book, Gibbon has compressed the history of the world during more than a thousand years. Is there in all prose literature so perfect a book as this ? In these days we write histories on far profounder methods ; but for the story of ten ordinary years Freeman and Froude will require a thousand pages ; and Macaulay's brilliant annals,



we are told, needed more time to write than the events needed to happen.

I often take up my Buffon. They tell us now that Buffon hardly knew the elements of his subject, and lived in the palæozoic era of science. 'It may be, but I find in Buffon a commanding thought, the Earth and its living races in orderly relation, and in the centre Man with his touch of them and his contrast to them. What organic thought glows in every line of his majestic scheme! What suggestions in it, what an education it is in itself! And if Buffon is not a man of science, assuredly he is a philosopher. No doubt his ideas of fibres and cells were rudimentary, his embryology weak, and his histology rude; but he had the root of the matter when he treated of animals as living organisms, and not simply as accumulations of microscopic particles. Now Buffon is a typical worker of the eighteenth century, at its high-water mark of industry, variety of range, human interest, and organising life.

We may take Adam Smith, Hume, Priestley, Franklin; they are four of the best types of the century; with its keen hold on moral, social, and physical truth at once; its genius for scientific and for social observation, its inexhaustible curiosity; and its continual sense that Man stands face to face with Nature. They felt the grand dualism of all knowledge in a way that perhaps we do not now grasp it with our infinity of special information, and a certain hankering after spiritualities that we doubt, and infinitesimal analyses which cease to fructify. Adam Smith, the first (alas! perhaps the last) real

economist, did not devote his life to polishing up a theory of rent. Astronomy, society, education, government, morals, psychology, language, art, were in turns the subject of his study, and in all he was master ; they all moved him alike, as part of man's work on earth. He never would have founded Political Economy if he had been merely an economist. And all this is more true of Hume, with a range even wider, an insight keener, a judgment riper, a creative method even more original. And so, Priestley and Franklin : as keen about gases and electric flashes as about the good of the commonwealth and the foundations of human belief. And when Turgot, himself one of the best of this band of social reformers, said of Franklin—

Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis,  
—it is true, in a wide sense, of them all, and especially of Turgot himself. They all sought to conquer the earth, as the dwelling-place of a reformed society of men.

This encyclopædic, social spirit belongs to all alike. We recognise in all the zeal to make their knowledge fruitful, systematic, common to all, useful to man. Out of fashion as such a thing is to us, every sentence they utter bears its meaning on its face ; every book, every voyage, every discovery, is hailed with *eureka* through Europe ; the voyages of travellers, or the surgical operation for cataract, instantly affect history, morals, logic, and philosophy. They cannot rest till every corner of the planet is explored, till the races of man are compared, and the products of the earth are stored in museums, classified in orders, grouped

into kingdoms. Science and social life, nay, philosophy and morals, were strangely transformed when the limits and the form of Man's Earth were first exactly realised. Cook and Banks, Anson and Bougainville, reveal to Europe the antipodes, and their human, brute, and vegetable worlds ; and every science and every art is alive with new ideas ; history, philosophy, morals, and social economy, are lit up with new laws. We see the same thing to-day ; but the sacred fire perhaps burns with a soberer flame ; the wonder and the sympathy are a little dulled by use ; and through the mountains of our materials the volcanic shock of a new truth is less distinctly felt.

The universal human interest of these men throbs in every page they write. Defoe is politician, romancer, theologian, economist, pamphleteer, and philosopher. Swift is all this, verse-maker, and many things beside. Voltaire is poet, historian, critic, moralist, letter-writer, polemist, arbiter in science, philosophy, and art in general ; like Virgil's monster, with a hundred tongues and a hundred throats of brass. Diderot was a very encyclopædic Briareus. But the intense social aim comes out in all alike, however different in nature and taste. Cowper himself has it, as he sits beside his tea-urn, watches his hare and his spaniel, or apostrophises his sofa. Fielding clothes it with flesh and blood, hot blood and solid flesh ; it lights up the hack-work of Goldsmith, and sheds a fragrance for ever through his lovely idyll of the Vicar's home ; Johnson in his arm-chair thunders it out as law to the club ; Bentham tears up the old Statute-book by passionate appeals to the greatest

happiness of the greatest number ; Burns sang for it the songs which will live for ever in English homes ; Hogarth, the Fielding of the brush, paints it ; Garrick, the most versatile of actors, played it ; Mozart, the most sympathetic of all musicians, found its melody ; Reynolds caught every smile on its cheek, and the light upon its eye ; and Hume, Adam Smith, Priestley, and Burke sounded some of its deepest notes.

Of all in this century, three men stand out, in three countries, as types of its vast range, of its organising genius, of its hold on the reality behind the veil that we see—Kant in Germany, Diderot in France, Hume in England. For us here, Hume is the dominant mind of the age ; with his consummate grasp of human life in all its moral, social, and physical conditions ; by his sense, good fellowship, urbanity, and manliness. This was not the age of the lonely thinkers in their studies, as Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, had been. Nor was it the age of Bacon, Pascal, Hobbes, and Locke, when philosophy was shaken by political and religious fanaticism. It was not the age of the wonderful specialists of our own day, when mountains of observation defy all attempts at system. It was an age more like the Revival of thought and learning—but with a notable difference. Its curiosity is as keen, its industry even greater ; its mental force as abundant. But it is far less wild ; its resources are under command ; its genius is constructive ; and its ruling spirit is social. It was the second and far greater Revival—that New Birth of time whereof the first line was led by Galileo, Harvey, Descartes, and Bacon ; whereof the second line was led by Newton,

Leibnitz, Montesquieu, Hume, Diderot, Kant ; whereof the third line will be led by those who are to come.

In the progress of Europe, especially in its mental progress, there is an incessant ebb and flow, a continual give and take. The intellectual lead passes from one to the other, qualified and modified by each great individual genius. In the sixteenth century it was Spain and Italy, in the seventeenth it was Holland and England, in the eighteenth it was France, and now perhaps it is Germany, which sets the tone, or fashion, in thought. For the first generation perhaps of the eighteenth century, England had the lead which Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Harvey, Cromwell, and William had given her in the century preceding. The contemporaries of Newton, Locke, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Defoe, and Addison were a force in combination which the worshippers of Louis XIV. did not immediately perceive, but which was above anything then extant in Europe. The revelation of this great intellectual strength in England was made by Montesquieu and Voltaire. Voltaire, if not exactly a thinker, was the greatest interpreter of ideas whom the world has ever seen, and became the greatest literary power in the whole history of letters. When in 1728 he took back to France his English experience and studies, he carried with him the sacred fire of freedom whereby the supremacy of thought began to pass to France. Within ten years that fire lit up some of the greatest beacons of the modern world. Voltaire wrote his *Essay on Manners* in 1740 ; Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* appeared in 1748, and its influence was greater

than that of any single work of Voltaire. The forty years, 1740-1780, were perhaps the most pregnant epoch in the history of human thought. It contained the works of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Vauvenargues, Buffon, Lavoisier, Rousseau, the Encyclopædists, Condorcet, and Turgot in France; and, in England, those of Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Gibbon, Robertson, Hume, Adam Smith, Priestley, Johnson, Goldsmith, and Gray. During the last twenty years of the century France was absorbed in her tremendous Revolution, and again the supremacy in literature passed away from her to give to Germany Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven; to give to England Burke, Bentham, Cowper, Burns, Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Scott. So sways the battle of ideas from age to age and from shore to shore.

This is not the place to discuss the vast movement of the human mind which is loosely called the Revolution. Our judgment on all this depends on the bent of our minds in theology, philosophy, and politics. One who holds on to his Bible chiefly for its damnable resources has assured us that this was the Satanic Age. If we look at its achievements, one is tempted to wish that our own age were more often visited by that accomplished gentleman. The century completely transformed all that had previously been known as to heat, gases, metals, electricity, plants, animals, tissues, diseases, geography, geology, the races, products and form of the earth, psychology, chronology, history, political and social and economic science. It would take a volume to enlarge on these.

One can but give the names of those departments of knowledge. Compare the anatomical resources of Dr. Radcliffe with those of Hunter, Bichat, and Dupuytren; the chemical and physical notions of Boyle with those of Davy, Volta, and Galvani; the physiology of Boerhaave with that of Lamarck; compare the classificatory notions of Ray with those of Buffon, Linnæus, and Cuvier; take the ideas on society of Hobbes or Harrington, and compare them with those of Hume, A. Smith, Burke, and Bentham; compare Gibbon's idea of history with that of Raleigh, Bacon, Milton. Compare the psychology of Kant with that of Descartes, or Locke; and we see that the century made a stride, not as we have done by enlarging the sciences, but in creating them or turning their rudiments into mature organisms.

The weak side of the century was certainly in beauty, in poetry, and the arts of form. It was essentially the age of prose; but still it was not prosaic. Its imaginative genius spoke in prose and not in verse. There is more poetry in the *Vicar of Wakefield* than in the *Deserted Village*, in *Tom Jones* than in Pope's *Iliad*, and the death of Clarissa Harlowe is more like Sophocles than the death of Addison's Cato. The age did not do well in verse; but if its verse tended to prose, its prose ever tended to rise into poetry. We want some word (Mr. Matthew Arnold will not let us use the word poetry) to express the imaginative power at work in prose, saturating it with the fragrance of proportion and form, shedding over the whole that indefinable charm of subtle suggestion, which belongs to rare thoughts clothed in

perfect words. For my part I find "the vision and the faculty divine" in the inexhaustible vivacity of *Tom Jones*, in the mysterious realism of *Robinson Crusoe*, in the terrible tension of *Clarissa's* tragedy, in the idyllic grace of the Vicar's home. This imaginative force has never since been reached in prose save by Walter Scott himself, and not even by him in such inimitable witchery of words. If it be not poetry, it is quite unlike the prose that we read or write to-day.

Besides, one cannot allow that there is *no* poetry in the century. Let us give a liberal meaning to poetry; and where we find creative fancy, charm of phrase, the vivid tone of a distinct voice that we could recognise in a thousand—there, we are sure, is the poet. For my part, I go so far as to admit that to be poetry which is quite intelligible, even if it have no subtlety, mystery, or inner meaning at all. Much as I prefer Shelley, I will not deny that Pope is a poet. Tennyson perhaps would never have run so near commonplace as do stanzas here and there in the famous *Elegy*, but does any one doubt that Gray's *Elegy* is poetry? And though Wordsworth is a greater man than Cowper, it is possible, had there never been a *Task*, that there might never have been an *Excursion*. The poetry of the century is below our lofty English average, but it is not contemptible; and when it is good it has some rare qualities indeed.

In the poetry of the century are three distinct types: first, that of Pope; next, that of which the *Elegy* is the masterpiece; lastly, the songs of Burns. Now the first belongs to the age of Louis XIV.



The second is the typical poetry of the century. The third is but the clarion that heralds the revolutionary outburst which gave us Byron, Shelley, Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Goethe, and Schiller. Cowper in part belongs to the three types ; he is the connecting link between them all : touching Pope by his easy mastery of rhyme, akin to Gray by his exquisite culture and grace, foretelling Wordsworth and Shelley by his moral and social earnestness. If the century produced little true poetry, it produced some little that is very good, and a good deal which has some very fine qualities. The *Rape of the Lock* is a poem in a class by itself, and Pope wrote other pieces of magical skill and verve. Goldsmith's poems would please us more if he had not bettered them himself in his own prose. Burns wrote the most ringing songs in our literature. Cowper is a true poet of a very rare type, one of the most important in the development of English poetry. And Gray's *Elegy* is better known and more widely loved than any single poem in our language. All this should be enough to save the age of prose from the charge of being prosaic.

In the best poetry of the century (at least after Pope's death) there is a new power, a new poetic field, a new source of poetry. The new source of poetry is the People ; its new field is the home ; the new power within it is to serve the cause of humanity. It told the short and simple annals of the poor. It is a field unknown to Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, or Pope. But Goldsmith has it in his heart of hearts ; such men as Thomson and Collins

and Beattie and Crabbe have it, though they remain on the lower ranges at their best ; Burns is the very prophet of it ; and it glows in a gentle hermit-like way in every murmur of Cowper's tender soul. *The Task* is by reason of this one of the landmarks of our literature, though its own nobler progeny may have lessened its charm to us. It is because the original charm is still as fresh as ever, that we may call the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* the central poem of the age. Our young word-mongers and unutterables will tell us to-day that its moralising is as obvious as a tombstone, that its melody is rudimentary and its epithets almost trivial. Yes ! and for that reason it has sunk into the soul of all who speak the English tongue ; it has created the new poetry of the cottage ; its very surrender of brilliancy, subtlety, or novelty is its strength. The sustained undertone of pathos, the magical unity of its thought and its colouring, the simple humanity of it, all these make the *Elegy* the poem of the eighteenth century, the voice of the humane age at its best.

Poetry is the central art ; but it is not all art : and the art of the century deserves a word. We may give up architecture at once. People were so much absorbed in making their homes comfortable within, that they seemed blind to ugliness elsewhere ; and if Ruskin is certain that Satan had to do with the Churches of the Georgian era, there is no means of disproving it. But Reynolds remains the greatest English painter ; Gainsborough and Romney have not been surpassed in their own line ; Hogarth remains still our greatest humorist with the pencil ; Garrick

is England's greatest actor ; Flaxman still her greatest sculptor ; and it is well to remember that Turner was of the Royal Academy before the century was out. But besides all these, Crome, Stothard, Blake, Bewick, Chippendale, Wedgwood, and Bartolozzi worked in the century—and in their given lines these men have never been surpassed.

There is another art which lies closer to civilisation than any art but poetry. Music is a better test of the moral culture of an age than its painting, or its sculpture, or even its architecture. Music, by its nature is ubiquitous, as much almost as poetry itself, in one sense more so, for its vernacular tongue is common to mankind. Music in its nature is social, it can enter every home, it is not the privilege of the rich ; and thus it belongs to the social and domestic life of a people, as painting and sculpture, the arts of the few, never have done or can do. It touches the heart and the character as the arts of form have never sought to do, at least in the modern world. When we test the civilisation of an age by its art, we should look to its music next to its poetry, and sometimes even more than to its poetry. Critics who talk about the debasement of the age when churchwardens built those mongrel temples must assuredly be deaf. Those churchwardens and the rest of the congregation wept as they listened to Handel and Mozart. One wearies of hearing how grand and precious a time is ours, now that we can draw a cornflower right.

Music is the art of the eighteenth century, the art wherein it stands supreme in the ages ; perfect, complete, and self-created. The whole gamut of music

(except the plain song, part song, dance, and mass) is the creation of the eighteenth century : opera, sonata, concerto, symphony, oratorio ; and the full uses of instrumentation, harmony, air, chorus, march, and fugue, all belong to that age. If one thinks of the pathos of those great songs, of the majesty of those full quires, of the inexhaustible melody of their operas, and all that Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Gluck, and the early years of Beethoven gave us, it is strange to hear that that age was dead to art. Neither the age which gave us the Madonnas and the Sistine, nor the age which gave us Rheims and Westminster Abbey, nor even the age which gave us the Parthenon, did more for humanity than the age to which we owe the oratorios, and the operas, the sonatas, symphonies, and masses of the great age of music.

Not merely was music of the highest order produced, not merely did that age create almost all the great orders of music, but the generation gave itself to music with a passion such as marks all ages wherein art reaches its zenith. When Handel and Buononcini, Gluck and Piccini, Farinelli and Caffarelli, divided the town, it was not with the languid partisanship which amuses our leisure, but with the passions of the Red and Green factions in the Circus of Byzantium. England, it is true, had few musicians of its own ; but Handel is for practical purposes an English musician, and the great Italian singers and the great German masters were never more truly at home than when surrounded by English admirers. Our people bore their fair share in this new Birth of Art, and not our people only, but the men of culture, of

rank, of power, and the Court itself. And the story that the King caused the whole house to rise when the Hallelujah Chorus was heard is a happy symbol of the enthusiasm of the time.

Their music showed that their hearts were in the right place ; but they showed it in more practical ways. The age, with all its grossness, laid the seeds of those social reforms which it is the boast of our own time to have matured. It was then that the greatest part of the Hospitals as we know them were founded ; the Asylums, Reformatories, Infirmaries, Benefit Societies, Sunday Schools, and the like. It was then, amidst a sea of misery and cruelty, that Howard began what Burke called " his circumnavigation of charity." Then too began that holy war against slavery and the slave trade, against barbarous punishments, foul prisons, against the abuses of justice, the war with ignorance, drunkenness, and vice. Captain Coram, and Jonas Hanway, and John Howard, and Robert Raikes, led the way for those social efforts which have taken such proportions. Jeremy Bentham and his followers struck at the abuses of law ; Clarkson and Wilberforce and the anti-slavery reformers at slavery and the trade in men. Methodism, or rather religious earnestness, lies at the heart of the eighteenth century, and the work of Wesley and Whitefield is as much a part of its life as the work of Johnson or Hume or Watt. That great revival of spiritual energy in the midst of a sceptical and jovial society was no accident, nor was it merely the impulse of two great souls. It is the same humanity which breathes through the

scepticism of Hume, and the humour of Fielding ; and it runs like a silver thread through the whole fabric of that epoch. Cowper is its poet, Wilberforce was its orator, Whitefield was its preacher, Wesley was its legislator, and Priestley himself its philosopher whom it cast forth. The abolition of slavery, a religious respect for the most miserable of human beings as a human soul, is its great work in the world. This was the central result of the eighteenth century ; nor can any century in history show a nobler. The new gospel of duty to our neighbour was of the very essence of that age. The French Revolution itself is but the social form of the same spirit. He who misses this will never understand the eighteenth century. It means Howard and Clarkson just as much as it means Fielding and Gibbon ; it means Wesley and Whitefield quite as much as it means Hume or Watt. And they who shall see how to reconcile Berkeley with Fielding, Wesley with Hume, and Watt with Cowper, so that all may be brought home to the fold of humanity at last, will not only interpret aright the eighteenth century, but they will anticipate the task of the twentieth.

A few words about the eighteenth century afford no space to touch on the greatest event of it—the Revolutionary crisis itself. The intellectual preparation for it is all that we can here note ; and we may hear the rumblings of the great earthquake in every page of Hume, Adam Smith, Priestley, and Bentham ; nay, in Cowper and Burns, and Wordsworth and Coleridge. The “ Rights of Man,” the “ Declaration of Independence,” “ the Negro’s Complaint,” “ the

greatest happiness of the greatest number," "A man's a man for a' that," the "new birth" of the Methodists, were all phases of one movement to attain the full conditions of humanity. The Revolution did not happen in 1789 nor in 1793. The Terror was in '93; the Old System collapsed in '89. But the Revolution is continuing still, violent in France, deep and quiet in England. No one of its problems is completely solved; no one of them is removed from solution; no one of its creations has complete possession of the field. The reconstruction begun more than a hundred years ago is doing still. For they see history upside down who look at the Revolution as a conflagration instead of a reconstruction; or who find in the eighteenth century a suicide instead of finding a birth.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

IN one of those delightful tales of Voltaire which nobody reads now (we are occupied in reading books about Voltaire's books, or rather articles on the books about Voltaire's books), I remember how the King of Babylon cured of excessive self-esteem a great satrap called Irax. The moment he awoke in the morning the master of the royal music entered the favourite's chamber with a full chorus and orchestra, and performed in his honour a cantata which lasted two hours ; and every third minute there came a refrain to this effect—

“ Que son mérite est extrême !  
Que de grâces ! que de grandeur !  
Ah ! combien Monseigneur  
Doit être content de lui-même ! ”

The cantata over, a royal chamberlain advanced and pronounced a harangue that lasted three-quarters of an hour, in which he extolled him for possessing all the good qualities which he had not got. At dinner, which lasted three hours, the same ceremonial was continued. If he opened his mouth to speak, the first chamberlain said, “ Hark ! we shall hear wisdom ! ” And before he had uttered four words, the second

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered at the London Institution in 1882.



chamberlain said, "What wisdom do we hear!" Then the third and fourth chamberlains broke into shouts of laughter over the good things which Irax had said, or rather ought to have said; and after dinner the same cantata was again sung in his honour. On the first day Irax was delighted; the second he found less pleasant; on the third he was bored; on the fourth he said he could bear it no longer; and on the fifth he was cured.

I sometimes think this nineteenth century with its material progress and its mechanical inventions, its steam and electricity, gas, and patents, is being treated by the press, and its other public admirers, much as the chamberlains in *Zadig* treated the satrap. The century is hardly awake of a morning before thousands of newspapers, speeches, lectures, and essays appear at its bedside, or its breakfast table, repeating as in chorus—

"Que son mérite est extrême !

Que de grâces ! que de grandeur !"

Surely no century in all human history was ever so much praised to its face for its wonderful achievements, its wealth and its power, its unparalleled ingenuity and its miraculous capacity for making itself comfortable and generally enjoying life. British Associations, and all sorts of associations, economic, scientific, and mechanical, are perpetually executing cantatas in honour of the age of progress, cantatas which (alas!) last much longer than three hours. The gentlemen who perform wonderful and unsavoury feats in crowded lecture halls, always remind us, that "Never was such a time as this nineteenth

century ! ” Public men laying the first stones of institutes, museums, or amusing the Royal Academy after dinner, great inventors, who have reaped fortunes and titles, raise up their hands and bless us in the benignity of affluent old age. I often think of Lord Sherbrooke, in his new robes and coronet, as the first chamberlain, bowing and crying out, “ What a noble age is this ! ” The journals perform the part of orchestra, banging big drums and blowing trumpets—penny trumpets, twopenny, threepenny, or sixpenny trumpets—and the speakers before or after dinner, and the gentlemen who read papers in the sections perform the part of chorus, singing in unison—

“ Ah ! combien Monseigneur  
Doit être content de lui-même ! ”

As a mere mite in this magnificent epoch, I ask myself, What have I done, and many plain people around me, who have no mechanical genius at all—what have we done to deserve this perpetual cataract of congratulation ? All that I can think of is the assurance that Figaro gives to the count, “ our lordships gave ourselves the trouble to be born in it ! ”

It is worth a few minutes’ thought to ask what is the exact effect upon *civilisation*, in the widest and highest sense of that term, of this marvellous multiplication of mechanical appliance to life ? This is a very wide question, and takes us to the roots of many matters, social, economic, political, moral, and even religious. Is the universal use of a mechanical process *per se* a great gain to civilisation, an unmixed gain—a gain without dangers or drawback ? Is an

age which abounds in countless inventions thereby alone placed head and shoulders above all the ages since historical times began? And this brings us to the point that the answer to the question largely depends on what we mean by civilisation. We need not attempt to define *civilisation*. Before any one can fully show the meaning of civilisation, he must see in a very clear way what is his own ideal of a high, social, moral, and religious life, and this is not the place to enter on any such solemn, not to say tremendous topic.

We had better not hope for any very slashing answer to the question, either in one extreme view or the other. We seldom get much from extreme views, but from complex and balanced views; and this is a very compound and balanced subject—this of civilisation and progress and material improvement. I should not ask the question if I thought that mechanical progress were an incalculable and unqualified gain to humanity. And we do not advance matters if, on the other hand, we decry material inventions or progress of any kind. We all know how at least one of the few living men of genius we still have amongst us, one of whom I can never speak without profound gratitude, honour, and affection, is wont to pour out his stirring, fascinating tirades against this age of steam and all its mechanical works—odes as lyrical, and as little to be reduced to logic as that of Gray's bard defying the Plantagenet King. I am no member myself of the society of St. George, and as a humble son of the nineteenth century I heartily welcome every form of mechanical improvement. The cause of pro-

gress is bound up with every principle worth having ; and material progress is an indispensable step in general progress. Let us hail the triumphs of steam, and electricity, and gas, and iron ; the railways and the commerce ; the industry, the appliances, and conveniences of our age. They are all destined to do good service to humanity. But still it is worth asking if the good they do is *quite* so vast, *quite* so unmixed, *quite* so immediate, as the chamberlains and the chorus make out in their perpetual cantata to the nineteenth century.

Let us note some of the mechanical glories of the last hundred years, as they are so often rehearsed. For four thousand years we know, and probably forty thousand years, man has travelled over land as fast as his own legs, or men's legs, or horses' legs could carry him, but no faster : over sea as fast as sails and oars could carry him. Now he goes by steam over both at least at three times the pace. In previous ages, possibly for twenty centuries, about a hundred miles a day was the outside limit of any long continuous journey. Now we can go four thousand miles by sea in fourteen days, and by land in five days. It used to occupy as many weeks, or sometimes months. We have now instantaneous communication with all parts of the globe. The whole surface of our planet has only been known about a hundred years ; and till our own day to get news from all parts of it to one given spot would certainly have required a year. The President of the United States delivers his message, and within three hours newspapers in all parts of the world have printed it word for word. For twenty

thousand years every fabric in use has been twisted into thread by human fingers, and woven into stuff by the human hand. Machines and steam-engines now make ten thousand shirts in the time that was formerly occupied by making one. For twenty thousand years man had got no better light than what was given by pitch, tallow, or oil. He now has gas and electricity, each light of which is equal to hundreds and thousands of candles. Where there used to be a few hundred books there are now one hundred thousand; and the London newspapers of a single year consume, I daresay, more type and paper than the printing presses of the whole world produced from the days of Gutemberg to the French Revolution.

You may buy a good watch now for as many shillings as it used to cost pounds, and a knife worth a week's labour is now worth the labour of one or two hours. The fish eaten in Paris is caught in Torbay; our loaf of bread is grown in California; and a child's penny toy is made in Japan; a servant girl can get a better likeness of herself for sixpence than her mother or her grandmother could have got for sixty pounds; the miners of the north, they say, drink champagne and buy pianos, and travel one hundred miles for a day's holiday. The brigade of Guards with breech-loaders would now decide the battle of Waterloo, or the battle of Blenheim, in an hour, and the *Devastation* would sink all the navies which fought at Trafalgar and the Nile. In old days if a regiment were needed (say in Delhi or in New Zealand), it could hardly have been summoned from home and placed

there within six months or a year. It could now be done in five or six weeks. Queen Elizabeth, they say, ruled over less than five million subjects, and Queen Anne perhaps over less than ten million. Queen Victoria enjoys the loyal devotion of at least two hundred and fifty millions. Bess counted the total revenues of government on one hand (I mean in millions); Anne could do it on two hands. Queen Victoria as Empress, I suppose, disposes of one hundred and fifty millions.

In the last century the capitals of Europe had a population hardly equal to that of Finsbury or Marylebone in our day. London has grown about eight or ten times in a hundred years. Whole districts as large as the entire kingdom of Alfred or St. Louis, which a hundred years ago were moorland and meadow, are now one continuous factory, where the wealth, the population, the product of one acre is equal to that of a whole county in the days of Queen Anne. I will not continue the tremendous recital any further. Every one can work it out for himself. Take the facts and figures of the days of Queen Anne, which, we are told, was a sort of Golden Age of the Beautiful, and multiply them by 50, 100, or 1000, and we get to our point of modern sublimity. And what Marlborough and Walpole, Swift and Addison, called the impossible is now the commonplace. Every one can state for himself the hyperbolic contrast between the material condition we see to-day, and the material condition in which society managed to live one, two, three centuries ago, nay, ten, or twenty, or a hundred centuries ago. Take it all in all, the merely material

physical, mechanical change in human life in the hundred years, from the days of Watt and Arkwright to our own, is greater than occurred in the thousand years that preceded, perhaps even in two thousand years or twenty thousand years. The external visible life of Horace Walpole and Pope did not essentially differ from that of Chaucer, Boccaccio, or Froissart, nor did it differ very much from that of Horace and Virgil; nor indeed did it utterly contrast with that of Aristophanes and Plato. Are we so *vastly*, so *enormously* the wiser, the nobler, the happier? Is the advance in real civilisation at all to be compared with the incredible 'leaps and bounds' of material improvement?

To ask such a question is to answer it. Robert Lowe, the Society of British Engineers, and the British Association itself, hardly ever pretended that this Victorian age is so incalculably wiser, better, more beautiful than any other in recorded history. What they say is that it has incalculably more good things, incredibly greater opportunities than any other. It has a thousand times the resources of any other age. Permit us to ask—Does it use them to a thousand times better purpose? I am no detractor of our own age. I do not know if there is any in which I would rather have lived, take it all round. We all feel, in spite of a want of beauty, of rest, of completeness, which sits heavy on our souls and frets the thoughtful spirit—we all feel a-tiptoe with hope and confidence. We *are* on the threshold of a great time, even if our time is not great itself. In science, in religion, in social organisation, we all know what

great things are in the air. "We shall see it, but not *now*"—or rather our children and our children's children will see it. The Vatican with its syllabus, the Mediævalists-at-all-costs, Carlyle, Ruskin, the Æsthetes, are all wrong about the nineteenth century. It is *not* the age of money-bags and cant, soot, hubbub, and ugliness. It is the age of great expectation and unwearied striving after better things. Still, is it the Millennium foretold by the prophets, by civil engineers and railway kings?

The last hundred years have seen in England the most sudden change in our material and external life that is recorded in history. It is curious how many things date from that 1770 or 1780. The use of steam in manufactures and locomotion by sea and land, the textile revolution, the factory system, the enormous growth of population, the change from a rural to a town life, the portentous growth of the Empire, the vast expansion of sea power, of commerce, of manufactures, of wealth, of intercommunication, of the Post; then the use of gas, electricity, telegraphs, telephones, steam presses, sewing machines, air engines, gas engines, electric engines, photographs, tunnels, ship canals, and all the rest. Early in the last century England was one of the lesser kingdoms in Europe, but one-third in size and numbers of France or Germany. Now our Empire is in size twenty times—twenty times—as big as either, and six or seven times as populous as either. London then was only one of a dozen cities in Europe, hardly of the area of Manchester or Leeds. It is now the biggest and most populous city in recorded history, nearly equal, 1



suppose, in size and population to all the capitals of Europe put together.

One hundred years ago to have lit this theatre, as brightly as it is now lighted, would have cost, I suppose, fifty pounds, and the labour of two or three men for an hour to light and snuff and extinguish the candles. It is now done for a shilling by one man in three minutes. A hundred years ago to have taken us all to our homes to-night would have cost, I suppose, on an average, five shillings a head and two hours of weary jolting. I trust we may all get home to-night for fourpence or sixpence a head at the most in half an hour. If you wanted an answer from a friend in Dublin or Edinburgh, it would have cost you by post (one hundred years ago) about two shillings in money and a fortnight in time. You now get an answer in thirty hours for twopence, or a penny if you are as brief as the Prime Minister. A hundred years ago, if you wanted to go there, it would have taken you a week, and you would have to make your will. You can now go in a day, and come back the next day. And so on—and so on. The chamberlain's refrain still runs in my head. The important point is that this most unparalleled change in material life only began about a hundred years ago.

Is the civilisation of the nineteenth century so incredibly superior to the civilisation of the eighteenth or the seventeenth century? England in 1882 is in many things wiser and stronger, perhaps better, than in 1782. But England in 1782 was wiser, stronger, and certainly better than in 1682. I should not like to compare 1682 with 1582, though many things

decidedly open questions in the days of Queen Bess had been well settled in those of the merry monarch ; and 1682 was perhaps a time when we should have felt life easier and safer than in 1582. But compare 1582 with 1482, or 1382. It is the difference between modern and mediæval life. Slowly and in the long run the ages do advance in civilisation. But taking England alone, and looking back for five centuries, do we find such an enormous impetus to civilisation in its high sense in the nineteenth century, as we find in its low sense, in its mere physical, material sense ?

Compare England with other countries in Europe. Whilst England in a hundred years has utterly transformed the face of its material life, France has done so in a much smaller degree, Italy and Germany even less, and Spain not at all. None of these countries has changed very much in population, in area, in relation of town and country, in density, in habits of locomotion, in material appliances. Thirty years ago, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Florence, and Madrid were to the eye not much unlike what they were in the days of Louis XV. and Frederick the Great. To this day country life in Brittany, in Auvergne, in Pomerania, Silesia, or Bohemia, in the Romagna, and Grenada, is substantially what it was in the days of the Seven Years' War. In the meantime, life in Surrey and Middlesex, in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Warwickshire, has outwardly changed more than it did between the Conquest and the Revolution. That is to say, England has in a hundred years undergone enormous material change ; relatively France and Germany, Italy and

Spain (except in one or two places), have undergone small material change. Has the *relative* position of these nations in the scale of true civilisation altered so very much? Not at all! Most persons would say that in the hundred years France had advanced in true civilisation about as fast as England; so too of Germany. Many persons might think both, or one at least, had advanced relatively faster than England. And yet their material progress has been incredibly less than that of England.

Take science. Science now enjoys a multitude of appliances which it never had before. Early in this century the planet was not even explored. Tens of thousands of important phenomena were unknown, because they lay out of the reach of human observation. Trade, material progress, wealth, and the discoveries have multiplied a thousand times the instruments and materials and opportunities of science. Steam, gas, electricity, telegraphy, photography, telescopes, microscopes, batteries, electric lights, electric casts, electric measures and conductors in forms infinite have given the modern man of science an armoury of incredible variety and power. To place beside the marvellous tools of modern science those with which Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Harvey, and Lavoisier worked is like putting the armoury of a modern ironclad beside that of a Chinese junk. And yet, is our science relatively to its opportunities so enormously superior to the science of any other age? Let us speak of our science with profound respect and honour. We are proud to think it inferior to none in history. Three names at least of the Victorian epoch,

Faraday, Darwin, and Thomson, will live in the history of science and mechanics. But great as our time is in science, no competent man will pretend that it is distinctly higher than the age which saw Newton, Herschel, Black, and Priestley ; or the age of Bacon, Harvey, Galileo, Descartes, and Leibnitz ; or the age of Buffon, D'Alembert, Lagrange, Lavoisier, and Bichat. You may raise your mechanical apparatus of science a thousandfold, you do not double your scientific genius once.

Or take philosophy. We are all philosophers nowadays in one sense, but is the philosophy of 1882 so vastly grander than the philosophy of 1782, fresh from Hume, and Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Kant, and Diderot ? Or is literature ? We read one thousand pages now where our forefathers read one. Every day the press turns out in legible type more matter than in Dr. Johnson's day it turned out in a year ; more than in Shakespeare's day it turned out in a century. And yet, is the age so far ahead in letters of the age of Voltaire, Rousseau, Burke, Goethe, Goldsmith, Schiller, Alfieri, Le Sage, Johnson, Fielding, Richardson, and Sterne ? Or to go back another hundred years, we may take the age of Corneille, Molière, Racine, Milton, Locke, and Dryden. There is good music in 1882 ; but is it so stupendously better than Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Gluck, and Beethoven ? There are good pictures ; but do we do better than Reynolds and Gainsborough, not to talk of Rubens, Vandyke, and Holbein ?

Civilisation is a very elastic, impalpable, undefinable thing. But where are we to turn to find the

tremendous relative superiority of 1882 over 1782, or 1682, or 1582? We may hunt up and down, and we shall only find this: Population doubling itself almost with every fresh generation—cities swelling year by year by millions of inhabitants and square miles of area—wealth counted by billions, power to go anywhere, or learn anything, or order anything, counted in seconds of time—miraculous means of locomotion, of transport, of copying anything, of detecting the millionth part of a grain or a hair's breadth, of seeing millions of billions of miles into space and finding more stars, billions of letters carried every year by the Post, billions of men and women whirled everywhere in hardly any time at all; a sort of patent Fairy Peribanou's fan which we can open and flutter, and straightway find everything and anything the planet contains for about half-a-crown; night turned into day; roads cut through the bowels of the earth, and canals across continents; every wish for any material thing gratified in mere conjurer's fashion, by turning a handle or adjusting a pipe—an enchanted world, where everything does what we tell it in perfectly inexplicable ways, as if some good Prospero were waving his hand, and electricity were the willing Ariel—that is what we have—and yet, is this civilisation? Do our philosophy, our science, our art, our manners, our happiness, our morality, overtop the philosophy, the science, the art, the manners, the happiness, the morality of our grandfathers as greatly as those of cultivated Europeans differ from those of savages? We are as much superior in material appliances to the men of Milton's day and Newton's

day, as they were to Afghans or Zulus. Are we equally superior in cultivation of brain, heart, and character, to the contemporaries of Milton and Newton?

Not to dwell on the higher sides of life, we may turn to the lighter side of civilisation—it is an indefinitely complex fact—take the bloom, or dress of social life—was life one hundred or two hundred years ago, before steam, electricity, and photography existed, so cramped and helpless a thing, so *borné*, and ill-provided? Somehow it was not. Take Horace Walpole's delightful letters and memoirs, or Saint-Simon's in France, the still more delightful memoirs of Miss Burney; take the history of Johnson's Club, and his life, and his friends, the story of Goldsmith with his fife travelling over Europe, or take Gibbon's memoirs, or Hume's, or Fielding's letters. Take the old *Spectator* and *Tatler*, *Rambler*, and the rest; read the letters of Pope, or Swift, or Dryden. Again, go close into the inner home of Milton, or Sir Philip Sidney, or Raleigh, Sir Thomas Browne, Montaigne, Rabelais, Shakespeare; even Chaucer, Froissart, Leonardo da Vinci, Raffaele, Buonarroti, or Benvenuto. We know how these men lived, what they thought about, and talked about, and how they passed their time. I institute no barren comparison between the value of their age and ours. They had in all conscience their folly, ignorance, lust, crime. I simply ask, did their want of all the material contrivances we have to-day blunt and cramp their lives so much as we, spoiled sons of the nineteenth century, would expect?

If Fielding went down to his home in Somersetshire, it took him several days to ride through muddy lanes, and we go in four hours ; if Swift went to Dublin it might occupy him a fortnight ; if Raleigh sailed to the West Indies and the Spanish Main, he would not be heard of at home for a year ; and when Shakespeare played *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, he had neither limelight, footlights, scenery, costumes, nor stage machinery, and he did not spend five thousand pounds before he drew up the curtain. When Milton went to Italy he did not manage to do the " regular North Italy round " in a fortnight, and he was not personally conducted to Galileo's villa at Arcetri ; though I dare say he saw as much there as most of us do ; and though even a schoolboy would think Galileo's telescope a clumsy old thing, I believe Gibbon and Montaigne, Montesquieu and Voltaire, had read nearly as much, and knew nearly as much, as Mark Pattison ; although, we are told, almost every subject of learning and science has been reconstructed many times over since their day. I dare say Buffon and Linnæus knew almost as much about animals and plants as Darwin himself, though they lived, if not in the pre-historic, certainly in the pre-evolution era. Addison and Voltaire wrote essays as good even as Matthew Arnold's, though neither Sweetness nor Light had been patented in those days ; and, though the Dublin and the Edinburgh mails now carry more sacks full of letters in a day than they used to carry in a year, I doubt if in a billion letters that Mr. Fawcett now despatches there is one that is worth a line of Swift's to Vanessa, or one of Hume's to Adam

Smith, or one of Gray's to Mason, or Cowper's to Hill, or one of Voltaire's to D'Alembert, or one of Goethe's to Schiller.

A scholar of the old days could hardly get sight of more than a few thousand books. Now he can get to London or Paris in a few hours, and see millions for the mere asking. We can do now, or see, or hear, in twelve hours, what it took our ancestors twelve months to do, or to see, or to hear. A man in Milton's day or Addison's day spent three thousand pounds in three years in travelling over Europe. He may now see as much for two hundred pounds in three months. And a year will show him more than Marco Polo, Captain Cook, and Christopher Columbus saw in their lives of voyaging. In Shakespeare's day a dozen men in a barn played *Lear* and *Othello* to three or four dozen men of leisure. There are now splendid theatres in every town in Europe, with electric lights and real thunder. It would have taken Horace Walpole or Pope three months of letter-writing and of travelling and talking to learn what a man can now learn of the world around him in an hour over his *Times* after breakfast.

Why is it that we don't get any farther? Because we know that Shakespeare got to the root of the matter in tragedy quite as deep as Mr. Irving. No one can call Pope or Addison, Voltaire or Montesquieu, wanting in culture. No one can deny that Milton had a fine style and a fine taste; no one can say that Johnson, Congreve, Dryden, Pope, Fielding, Reynolds, and Charles James Fox passed narrow, stunted, dull lives. And yet the tools, the appliances, the con-



veniences of these men's lives were, in comparison with ours, as the tools, appliances, and conveniences of the ancient Britons or the South Sea islanders were to theirs. Why, then, with all this arsenal of appliances, do we not do more? Can it be that we are overwhelmed with our appliances, bewildered by our resources, puzzled with our mass of materials, by the mere opportunities we have of going everywhere, seeing everything, and doing anything?

We have been so much delighted with our new material acquisitions, that we forget what risks and drawbacks and burdens they involve; we are often blind to the evils they in turn introduce, and we imagine that these discoveries enlarge the human powers, when they only multiply the human *instruments*. When the books of a year and of a library were counted by hundreds or thousands, learned men could really know what was best to be known, and mastered that best. But when books are counted by hundreds of thousands, and millions, it is almost a matter of chance what a man reads, and still more what he remembers. Enormous multiplication of material necessarily involves great subdivision of work. This system of subdividing every study into special lines grows with strange rapidity. The incalculable accumulation of new material, and the intense competition to gather still more material, drive students to limit their research to smaller and smaller corners, until it ends often in ludicrous trivialities, and mere mechanical registering of the most obvious facts, instead of thought and mental grip. A hundred years ago a naturalist was a man who, having

mastered, say, some millions of observations, had, if he possessed a mind of vigour, some idea of what Nature is. Now, there are millions of billions of possible observations, all in many different sciences, and as no human brain can deal with them, men mark off a small plot, stick up a notice to warn off intruders, and grub for observations there. And so a naturalist now often knows nothing about Nature, but devotes himself say to one hundredth or thousandth part of Nature—say the section of *Annelida*—and of these, often to one particular worm, or he takes the *Gasteropods*, and then he confines himself to a particular kind of snail; and then after twenty years he publishes a gigantic book about the co-ordination of the maculæ on the wings of the extinct *Lepidoptera*, or it may be on the genesis of the tails of the various parasites that inhabited the palæozoic flea. I don't say but what this microscopic, infinitely vast, infinitesimally small work has got to be done. But it has its dangers, and it saps all grip and elasticity of mind, when it is done in a crude, mechanical way by the medal-hunting tribe.

When we multiply the appliances of human life, we do not multiply the years of life, nor the days in the year, nor the hours in the day. Nor do we multiply the powers of thought, or of endurance; much less do we multiply self-restraint, unselfishness, and a good heart. What we really multiply are our difficulties and doubts. Millions of new books hardly help us when we can neither read nor remember a tithe of what we have. Billions of new facts rather confuse men who do not know what to do with the

old facts. Culture, thought, art, ease, and grace of manner, a healthy society, and a high standard of life, have often been found without any of our modern resources in a state of very simple material equipment. Read the delightful picture of Athenian life in the Dialogues of Plato, or in the comedies of Aristophanes, or of Roman life in the epistles of Horace, or of Mediæval life in the tales of Boccaccio, or Chaucer, or of Oriental life in the Arabian Nights, or in the books of Confucius and Mencius, or the tales of old Japan, or go back to the old Greek world in the Odyssey of Homer, and the odes of Pindar, Theocritus, and Hesiod. In all of these we get glimpses of societies which are to us ideal in their charm : humane, happy, wise, and bright. No one wishes to return to them. We are better off as we are. These idyllic ages of poetry and story had their own vice, folly, ignorance, narrowness, crime. They wanted things indispensable to civilisation in its highest form. But they had this. They had wisdom, beauty, happiness, though they had none of our material appliances—neither steam, nor railways, nor factories, nor machinery, nor coal, nor gas, nor electricity, nor printing presses, nor newspapers, nor underground railways, nor penny post, nor even post-cards. And what they fell short of, they would not have got by all the steam-engines and telegraphs and post-offices on earth.

Steam and factories, telegraphs, posts, railways, gas, coal, and iron, suddenly discharged upon a country as if by a deluge, have their own evils that they bring in their train. To cover whole counties with squalid buildings, to pile up one hundred

thousand factory chimneys, vomiting soot, to fill the air with poisonous vapours till every leaf within ten miles is withered, to choke up rivers with putrid refuse, to turn tracts as big and once as lovely as the New Forest into arid, noisome wastes ; cinder-heaps, cesspools, coal-dust, and rubbish—rubbish, coal-dust, cesspools, and cinder-heaps, and overhead by day and by night a murky pall of smoke—all this is not an heroic achievement, if this Black Country is only to serve as a prison yard or workhouse yard for the men, women, and children who dwell there.

To bury Middlesex and Surrey under miles of flimsy houses, crowd into them millions and millions of overworked, underfed, half-taught, and often squalid men and women ; to turn the silver Thames into the biggest sewer recorded in history ; to leave us all to drink the sewerage water, to breathe the carbonised air ; to be closed up in a labyrinth of dull, sooty, unwholesome streets ; to leave hundreds and thousands confined there, with gin, and bad air, and hard work, and low wages, breeding contagious diseases, and sinking into despair of soul and feebler condition of body ; and then to sing pæans and shout, because the ground shakes and the air is shrill with the roar of infinite engines and machines, because the blank streets are lit up with garish gas-lamps, and more garish electric lamps, and the Post Office carries billions of letters, and the railways every day carry one hundred thousand persons in and out of the huge factory we call the greatest metropolis of the world—this is surely not the last word in civilisation.

Something like a million of paupers are kept year by year from absolute starvation by doles ; at least another million of poor people are on the border-line, fluttering between starvation and health, between pauperism and independence ; not one, but two, or three, or four millions of people in these islands are struggling on the minimum pittance of human comfort and the maximum of human labour ; something like twenty millions are raised each year by taxation of intoxicating liquors ; something like one hundred thousand deaths each year of disease distinctly preventible by care and sufficient food, and sanitary precaution and due self-restraint ; infants dying off from want of good nursing, like flies ; families herded together like swine, eating, drinking, sleeping, fighting, dying, in the same close and foul den ; the kicking to death of wives, the strangling of babies, the drunkenness, the starvation, the mendicancy, the prostitution, the thieving, the cheating, the pollution of our vast cities in masses, waves of misery and vice, chaos and neglect—all this counted, not here and there in spots and sores (as such things in human society always will be), but in areas larger than the entire London of Elizabeth, masses of population equal to the entire English people of her age. I will sum it up in words not my own, but written the other day by one of our best and most acute living teachers, who says, “ Our present type of society is in many respects one of the most horrible that has ever existed in the world’s history—boundless luxury and self-indulgence at one end of the scale, and at the other a condition of life as cruel as that of a Roman slave,

and more degraded than that of a South Sea islander." Such is another refrain to the cantata of the nineteenth century, and its magnificent achievements in industry, science, and art.

What is the good of carrying millions of people through the bowels of the earth, and at fifty miles an hour, if millions of working people are forced to live in dreary, bleak suburbs, miles and miles away from all the freshness of the country, and away miles and miles even from the life and intelligence of cities? What is the good of ships like moving towns, that cross the Atlantic in a week, and are as gorgeous within as palaces, if they sweep millions of our poor who find nothing but starvation at home? What is the use of electric lamps, and telephones and telegraphs, newspapers by millions, letters by billions, if sempstresses stitching their fingers to the bone can hardly earn fourpence by making a shirt, and many a man and woman is glad of a shilling for twelve hours' work! What do we all gain if in covering our land with factories and steam-engines we are covering it also with want and wretchedness? And if we can make a shirt for a penny and a coat for sixpence, and bring bread from every market on the planet, what do we gain if they who make the coat and the shirt lead the lives of galley slaves, and eat their bread in tears and despair, disease and filth?

We are all in the habit of measuring success by *products*, whilst the point is, how are the products consumed, and by whom, and what sort of lives are passed by the producers? So far as mechanical improvements pour more wealth into the lap of the

wealthy, more luxury into the lives of the luxurious, and give a fresh turn to the screw which presses on the lives of the poor; so far as our inventions double and treble the power of the rich, and double and treble the helplessness of the poor, giving to him that hath, and taking away from him that hath not even that which he has,—so far these great material appliances of life directly tend to lower civilisation, retard it, distort, and deprave it. And they *do* this, so far as we spend the most of our time in extending and enjoying these appliances, and very little time in preparing for the new conditions of life they impose on us, and in remedying the horrors that they bring in their train.

It may be said that there is no necessary connection between great mechanical improvements and these social diseases and horrors. No *necessary* connection, perhaps, but there is a plain historical connection. Fling upon a people at random a mass of mechanical appliances which invite them and force them to transform their entire external existence—to turn home work into factory work, hand work into machine work, man's work into child work, country life into town life, to have movement, mass, concentration, competition, where quiet individual industry had been the habit for twenty generations, and these things follow. Wherever the great steam system, factory system, unlimited coal, iron, gas, and railway system, has claimed a district for its own, there these things are. The Black Country and the Coal Country, the Cotton Country, the central cities, the great ports, seem to grow these things as certainly as they turn

their streams into sewers, and their atmosphere into smoke and fog. Read Fielding, or Swift, or Chaucer; and, though we find in the England of the eighteenth century and the fourteenth century plenty of brutality, and ignorance, and cruelty, we do not find these huge mountains of social disease, which seem inevitable the moment we have sudden material changes in life produced by vast mechanical discoveries.

There are thus two ways in which a sudden flood of mechanical inventions embarrasses and endangers civilisation in the very act of advancing it. Science, philosophy, education, become smothered with the volume of materials before they have learned to use them, bewildered by the very multitude of their opportunities. Art, manners, culture, taste, suffer by the harassing rapidity wherewith life is whirled on from old to new fashion, from old to new interest, until the nervous system of the race itself is agitated and weakened by the never-ending rattle. Suppose that a few more discoveries yet enabled us, as Jules Verne's heroes, to pass at will like gnomes through the centre of the earth, or the depths of the sea, and the regions of space, to make a holiday tour to the volcanoes of the moon, and the fiery whirlpools of the sun, to take soundings in a comet's tail, and to hold scientific meetings in the nebulæ of Orion—we should seem to one another madmen; for we should have no common point of interest or action, of rest or affection. Rest and fixity are essential to thought, to social life, to beauty; and a growing series of mechanical inventions making life a string of dissolving views is a bar to rest and to fixity of any sort.



And if this restless change weakens the thought, the culture, and the habits of those who have leisure or wealth, it degrades and oppresses the life of those who labour and suffer, for their old habits of life are swept away before their new habits of life are duly prepared ; and the increased resources of society are found in practice to be increased opportunities for the skilful to make themselves masters of the weak.

But amidst all the dangers of these material appliances flung random upon a society unprepared for them, let us beware how we join in the impatience which protests that we are better without them. Let Carlyle pronounce anathemas on steam-engines, and Ruskin seek by the aid of St. George to abolish factories from England ; all this is permitted to a man of genius, for all is permitted to genius, and it is perhaps a grim way of giving us ample warning. But men of practical purpose have a different aim. The railways, the factories, the telegraphs, the gas, the electric wonders of all kinds, are here. No latter-day sermons or societies of St. George can get rid of them, or persuade men to give up what they find so enormously convenient. Nay, the case is far stronger than this. These things are amongst the most precious achievements of the human race, or rather, they will be, when we have learned how to use them without all the evils they bring with them. Man, in his desperate struggle with the forces of nature, is far too slightly armed to dispense with any one of the appliances that the genius of man can discover. He needs them all to get nearer to the mystery of the world, to furnish his material wants, to raise and beautify his

personal and social life. There is one way in which they may be made a curse, not a blessing, and that is to exaggerate their value, to think that new material appliances to life form a truly higher life ; that a man is *ipso facto* a nobler being because he can travel a thousand miles in twenty-four hours, and hear the words that a man is speaking in New York. What has happened to the nineteenth century is what happens to a country when a gold-field is suddenly discovered. Civilised life for the time seems dancing mad ; and though men will give a hundred dollars for a glass of champagne, degradation and want are commoner even than nuggets. It is significant that the most powerful pictures of degradation which the American continent has produced were drawn in the Western gold-fields, and the most serious scheme of modern communism has been thought out in the same ground. But the nugget (the sudden acquisition of vast material resources) makes havoc in London and Manchester as much as in San Francisco or Melbourne. It does not follow, as some prophets tell us, that gold is not a useful metal, only we may buy gold too dear.

Society, to use Herbert Spencer's profound suggestion, is a continual action and reaction between the forces that divide it into new forms of life, and those which reunite these new forms in harmony. Or, to use Comte's still more abstract theory, society is the result of the equilibrium between progress and order, or new phases and old types. But in an age of sudden material expansion, the forces that drive on the new phases in special lines are abnormally raised

to fever heat, whilst those which in ordinary times are active to preserve the type are routed, abashed, and bewildered. In the long run the course of Order will rally again ; but for the moment it is asked to do its work in what is something like an invasion or an earthquake. We have hardly yet got so far as to recognise that the sudden acquisition of vast material resources is not only a great boon to humanity, but also a tremendous moral, social, and even physical and intellectual experiment. Society is a most subtle organisation ; and we are apt to lose sight of the fact that an unlimited supply of steam power, or electric power, is not necessarily pure gain. The progress achieved in the external conditions of life within the last hundred years is no doubt greater than any recorded in human history. It is obvious that other kinds of progress have advanced at no such express speed. But, until all kinds of human energy get into more harmonious proportion, cantatas to the nineteenth century will continue to pall upon the impartial mind.

Socially, morally, and intellectually speaking, an era of extraordinary changes is an age that has cast on it quite exceptional duties. A child might as well play with a steam-engine or an electric machine, as we could prudently accept our material triumphs with a mere 'rest and be thankful.' To decry steam and electricity, inventions and products, is hardly more foolish than to deny the price which civilisation itself has to pay for the use of them. There are forces at work now, forces more unwearied than steam, and brighter than the electric arc, to re-

humanise the dehumanised members of society ; to assert the old immutable truths ; to appeal to the old indestructible instinct ; to recall beauty ; forces yearning for rest, grace, and harmony ; rallying all that is organic in man's social nature, and proclaiming the value of spiritual life over material life. But there never was a century in human history when these forces had a field so vast before them, or issues so momentous on their failure or their success. There never was an age when the need was so urgent for synthetic habits of thought, systematic education, and a common moral and religious faith.

There is much to show that our better genius is awakened to the task. Stupefied with smoke, and stunned with steam-whistles, there was a moment when the century listened with equanimity to the vulgarest of its flatterers. But if Machinery were really its last word, we should all be rushing violently down a steep place, like the herd of swine.

## NOTES

### MATTHEW ARNOLD

**Matthew Arnold** (1822-1888) was the son of Thomas Arnold, the famous Headmaster of Rugby. He became Inspector of Schools in 1851, and was for ten years Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He did brilliant work in the cause of education, but his wider fame is, of course, based on his poetry and criticism.

p. 1, ll. 7-10. **Philistinism.** Arnold divided English society into three classes: the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace. Philistinism was therefore his term for the outlook of the materialistic middle class. **Note of provinciality.** This phrase occurs in the essay on "The Literary Influence of Academies," *Essays in Criticism*, First Series. **Barbarian** by derivation means simply a foreigner, and was applied to peoples living outside the pale of the Roman Empire and its civilisation. It gradually came to signify one who has no sympathy with literary culture, and in that sense Arnold applied it to the English aristocracy of his time in *Culture and Anarchy*. **Arminius.** Many of the satirical letters composing Arnold's *Friendship's Garland*, which appeared in 1871, were presented as the work of an earnest young Prussian, Arminius von Thunder-ten-Trönckh—a name taken from Voltaire's *Candide*. **Zeit-Geist** (literally Time-Spirit), from Goethe's *Faust*, is used to mean the general outlook characteristic of a particular period.

p. 1, l. 20. **sweetness and light.** This watchword, which will always be associated with Arnold, occurs first in *Culture and Anarchy*. The phrase was originally Swift's.

p. 1, l. 21. **Swift,** Jonathan (1667-1745), the great satirist, author of *Gulliver's Travels*.

p. 1, l. 23. **sweet reasonableness.** First used by Arnold in the Preface to *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) and repeated frequently in *Literature and Dogma*.

p. 2, l. 5. **Beaconsfield** (1804-1881), Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, statesman and novelist, twice Prime Minister.

p. 2, l. 16. **Carlyle**, Thomas (1795-1881), author of *The French Revolution*, and many other historical and social studies still unexcelled in vividness and originality.

p. 2, l. 20. ἔπεα πτερόεντα, winged words (Homer).

p. 2, l. 29. **Homer.** The blind poet to whom the Greek epics of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are ascribed.

p. 2, ll. 29-31. εὐφύια, natural goodness of form or disposition. Hence εὐφυής, the well-bred, well-disposed man. **epieikeia.** (ἐπιείκεια) is equivalent in Aristotle to goodness, the perfection of the social virtues. ἐπιεικής, the reasonable, moderate, kindly man. καλοκάγαθός, literally "the beautiful and brave man." It was applied originally to the nobleman, then became the equivalent of our "gentleman."

p. 2, l. 32. **Lucian** (A.D. 90-180), Greek writer. Humour and satire distinguish most of his eighty-two *Dialogues*.

p. 3, l. 11. **Milton**, John (1608-1674), the blind poet of Puritan England, who wrote *Paradise Lost*. See *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

p. 3, ll. 13-15. **Ænone**, etc. *Ænone* is a poem by Tennyson; *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by Keats; *Prometheus Unbound* by Shelley; *Atalanta in Calydon* by Swinburne.

p. 4, ll. 1-4. **our poet's eye.** The reference is to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v. Sc. 1:

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven."

p. 4, l. 25. **the three Lord Shaftesburys.** Arnold used a fable of the three aspects of the great philanthropist, Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885), to illustrate a point of religious doctrine in *Literature and Dogma*. Shaftesbury, although a national benefactor, represented in some respects a harsh and narrow school of thought.

p. 4, l. 28. **Empedocles or Thyrsis.** *Empedocles on Etna and Thyrsis* are both poems by Arnold.

p. 4, l. 29. **sober, steadfast and demure.** Milton's *Il Penseroso*, l. 32

p. 5, l. 6. **melts his wings.** The allusion is to the story of Icarus, who was able to fly with a pair of wings cemented with wax, but went so high that the sun melted the wax and caused his death.

p. 5, l. 20. **gnomic, aphoristic.** Gnostic poetry has been defined as consisting of brief observations on human life and society.

\* p. 5, ll. 23-24. **Solon**, the famous Athenian legislator, born about 638 B.C. Of his poems only fragments are available. **Xerophanes**, a Greek philosopher who flourished about 576-480 B.C. **Theognis**, an elegiac and gnostic poet of Megara who lived about 548 B.C.

p. 5, l. 30. **Frere** (1769-1846), diplomat and author, famous as the translator of Aristophanes.

p. 6, l. 14. **τετράγωνος ἀνὴρ ψόγου**, a perfect man (literally, four-square), without flaw; used by Plato.

p. 6, l. 21. **Radiant.** The lines are quoted from Arnold's sonnet entitled "Austerity of Poetry."

p. 6, l. 28. **Cerameicus**, the Potter's Quarter, a district of Athens.

p. 7, l. 7. **Sophocles.** Greek tragedian, born 495 B.C., who, in Arnold's famous line, "saw life steadily and saw it whole." See p. 101. **Epictetus**, the Stoic philosopher, originally a slave, who taught at Rome in the first century A.D. **Marcus Aurelius**, Roman Emperor (A.D. 121-180), a follower of Epictetus, whose *Meditations* are still universally read and quoted.

p. 7, ll. 15-21. **Hyde Park**, etc. These are all references to some of Arnold's best-known poems. **Geist**, **Matthias**, Arnold's pets, a dachshund and a canary.

p. 7, l. 25. **One great lesson.** Harrison is alluding to Matthew Arnold's sonnet *Quiet Work*:

One lesson of two duties kept at one,  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—  
Of toil unsevered from tranquillity!

p. 7, l. 27. **ohne Hast, ohne Rast**, without haste, without rest (Goethe).

p. 7, l. 29. **yellow primrose**, referring to the lines from Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* :

A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

p. 8, l. 1. **preacher**. The quotation comes from the sonnet *In Harmony with Nature*.

p. 8, l. 5. **Aristotle**, the most renowned of all Greek philosophers (384-322 B.C.), a pupil of Plato and preceptor to Alexander the Great.

p. 9, l. 6. **tedious as Wordsworth**. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), although undoubtedly one of the greatest of English singers, composed in his later years much verse that was uninspired and wearisome.

p. 9, l. 24. **Pegasus**, the winged horse of Greek fable, used as a symbol of poetic inspiration.

p. 9, l. 29. **Racine** (1639-1699), French dramatic poet.

p. 10, l. 1. **Maestro senza errore**, a master without a fault, the title given to the Italian painter Andrea del Sarto.

p. 11, l. 33. **Homero-eid similes**, lengthy and detailed similes such as Homer employed.

p. 12, ll. 4-5. **The weary Titan** (*i.e.* England), from *Heine's Grave*. **That sweet city** (*i.e.* Oxford), from *Thyrsis*.

p. 12, ll. 10-14. **Still**, etc., from the sonnet *Quiet Work*. **Whereo'er**, etc., from the sonnet *Written in Butler's Sermons*.

p. 12, l. 22. **cacophonies**, derived from a Greek word meaning ill-sounding. Discordant notes, ugly sounds.

p. 12, l. 26. **Parnassus**, the mountain celebrated as the seat of Apollo and the Muses.

p. 14, l. 6. **was breathed on**, from *Lines Written in Kensington Gardens*.

p. 14, l. 9. ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, "countless laughter," from the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus.

p. 14, l. 14. **Castalian**. Castalia was a fountain on Mount Parnassus.



p. 15, l. 1. **Sainte-Beuve**, Charles Augustin (1804-1869), French critic, author of a celebrated series of studies of writers and their works, *Les Causeries du Lundi*.

p. 15, l. 5. **Dagon**, the idol of the Philistines.

p. 15, l. 29. **poetry . . . the criticism of life**. See "The Study of Poetry" in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

p. 15, l. 31. **Kant**, Immanuel (1709-1784), German philosopher, author of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

p. 16, ll. 18-20. **Johnson**, Samuel (1709-1784), compiler of the famous *Dictionary*, who held uncontested sway in the literary circles of his age. **Hallam**, Henry (1777-1859), author of the *Constitutional History of England* and father of Arthur Hallam, whom Tennyson lamented in *In Memoriam*. **Southey**, Robert (1774-1843), Poet Laureate from 1813 to 1843. **Macaulay**, Thomas Babington, Lord (1800-1859), historian, critic, statesman, and author of the vigorous *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

p. 17, l. 20. **laudator**, etc., a praiser of times gone by.

p. 18, l. 5. **longueurs**, prolixity, long-windedness.

p. 18, l. 7. **Byron**, Lord (1788-1824), author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, whose work and personality are the subject of many passages of Arnold's prose and poetry. The quotation comes from the *Memorial Verses on the Death of Wordsworth*.

p. 18, l. 11. **Dryden**, John (1631-1700), the leading poet, dramatist, critic, and satirist of his day. **Coleridge**, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834), a genius whose fame rests on a few immortal poems, some valuable criticism, and the descriptions by contemporaries of his amazing "inspired monologues" on literature and metaphysics.

p. 18, ll. 14, 15. **Sénancour**, Etienne de (1770-1846), a French writer whose *Obermann* inspired two of Arnold's best-known elegies. **Amiel**, Henri Frédéric (1821-1881), Swiss philosopher, whose deep but melancholy speculations were revealed after his death by his *Journal Intime*. **Joubert**, Joseph (1754-1824), a French thinker whose fame rests on the *Pensées* or Reflections published after his death from his manuscript notes. **Heine**, Heinrich (1799-1856), the greatest of German lyric poets. See Arnold's *Heine's Grave* and the

essay on Heine in *Essays in Criticism*, First Series. **the Guérins**, Maurice (1810-1839) and Eugénie (1805-1848) de Guérin, were brother and sister. The former's poetry and the latter's mysticism and devotion to her brother's memory have had a wide appeal. See *Essays in Criticism*, First Series.

p. 18, l. 21. **Shelley**, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822), the ethereal poet whom Arnold described as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." See *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

p. 18, l. 28. **Keats**, John (1795-1821), author of many superb odes and sonnets, whose untimely death Shelley lamented in *Adonais*.

p. 19, ll. 3-6. **Tennyson**, Alfred, Lord (1809-1892), the leading poet of the Victorian Age. See pp. 46-90. **Spenser**, Edmund (1552-1599), one of the glorious Elizabethans. His chief work was the magnificent allegorical epic of *The Faerie Queene*. **Scott**, Sir Walter (1771-1832), "the Wizard of the North," who wrote the noble series of Waverley Novels and many stirring narrative poems.

p. 19, l. 12. **exceptis excipiendis**, the due exceptions being made.

p. 19, l. 24. **English Poets**, a collection of short studies of all English poets, followed by representative passages from their works, in five volumes, edited by T. H. Ward (Macmillan).

p. 19, l. 27. **Pyx**. The Chamber of the Pyx in Westminster Abbey contained the "pyx" or chest in which were kept the gold and silver plates used as standards in testing the weight and fineness of coins of the realm.

p. 19 note. **obiter dicta**, things said by the way, incidental remarks. **ex cathedra**, literally from the bench, therefore with high authority.

## RUSKIN

**Ruskin**, John (1819-1900), the son of a wealthy merchant, was educated privately and at Oxford, taking his degree in 1842. In the following year he published his *Modern*

*Painters*, the first of a series of works on aesthetics and the history of art which exercised a remarkable influence on contemporary thought. He afterwards became something of a prophet to his age on economics, education, religion, and social issues generally; but his marvellous gift of expression usually inspired more enthusiasm than did his actual doctrine. His work receives to-day much less attention than it deserves. Frederic Harrison also wrote a biography of Ruskin in the *English Men of Letters* series.

p. 20, l. 20. **Saint Bernard** (1091-1153), Abbot of Clairvaux, founder of the monastic order of Bernardines.

• p. 21, l. 4. **Dante**, Alighieri (1265-1321), the greatest of Italian poets, author of the *Divine Comedy*.

p. 21, l. 7. **Petrarch**, Francesco (1304-1374), Italian poet, famous for the odes and sonnets addressed to his beloved Laura.

p. 21, l. 8. **Francis**, Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), founder of the Franciscan Order.

p. 22, l. 4. **Mantegna**, Andrea (1431-1506), Italian painter of religious subjects as frescoes and altar-pieces.

p. 23, l. 10. **through a glass darkly**. From 1 *Corinthians*, xiii. 12.

p. 24, l. 9. **millstone**. From *Matthew*, xviii. 6.

p. 24, l. 11. **bow of Ulysses**. Ulysses, the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, had a bow which no one else was strong enough to bend. When he came home from his long wanderings, it was by bending it and turning it on his enemies that he first made known his identity. This passage (written in 1809) has a striking resemblance to another occurring in Lord Morley's *Study of Literature* (1887): "There have been in our generation three strong masters in the art of prose writing. There was, first of all, Carlyle, there was Macaulay, and there is Mr. Ruskin. These are all giants and they have the rights of giants. But I do not believe that a greater misfortune can befall the students who attend classes here, than that they should strive to write like any one of these three illustrious men. . . . It is not everybody who can bend the bow of Ulysses, and most men only do themselves a mischief by trying to bend it."

p. 24, l. 18. **Ethics**, one of Aristotle's works.

p. 25, l. 23. **euphuism**, extravagant and affected style, an Elizabethan fashion set by the characters in Lyly's romance of *Euphues* (1579).

p. 26, ll. 6-8. **afflatus**, literally a breathing, inspiration. **priestess**. The god Apollo was supposed to speak through the mouth of the priestess of the famous Greek temple at Delphi, and his oracles were delivered in verse, usually very mystifying.

p. 26, l. 23. **Hume**, David (1711-1776), philosopher and historian, whose work was hailed as one of the foremost liberative influences in eighteenth-century Europe.

p. 26, l. 30. **Bossuet**, Jacques Benigne (1627-1704), French theologian, renowned for the eloquence of his preaching. **Jeremy Taylor** (1613-1667), English divine, author of *Holy Living and Holy Dying*.

p. 27, l. 5. **Turner**, Joseph Mallord William (1775-1851), English landscape painter, whose fame owes a great deal to Ruskin's interpretation of his work.

p. 27, ll. 13, 14. **Defoe**, Daniel (1661-1731), author of *Robinson Crusoe*, often spoken of as "the father of the English novel." **Goldsmith**, Oliver (1728-1774), author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and friend of Dr. Johnson. **Lamb**, Charles (1775-1834), the delightful humorist who wrote the *Essays of Elia*. He was a close friend of both Wordsworth and Coleridge.

p. 27, l. 21. **Berkeley**, George, Bishop (1684-1753), whose works founded a school of philosophy which still bears his name.

p. 28, l. 7. **Browne**, Sir Thomas (1605-1682), physician and antiquary, author of *Religio Medici*, etc. His sonorous, rhythmic, and heavily Latinised prose has an impressiveness which is all its own.

p. 28, l. 27. **purpurei panni**, purple patches, ornate passages.

p. 30, l. 27. **Grimm's law**. Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), German philologist, stated the principle on which words change as they pass through or into different languages.

p. 31, l. 6. **Old Yew.** *In Memoriam*, ii. 1.

p. 31, l. 24. **Gibbon**, Edward (1737-1794), historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. See pp. 111-125.

p. 31, l. 27. **Burke**, Edmund (1729-1797), statesman and orator, who, in Goldsmith's words,

Though born for the universe, narrowed his mind,  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.

p. 3, l. 28. **De Quincey**, Thomas (1785-1859), a powerful prose writer; his *Confessions of an Opium Eater* tell something of his own dark experiences.

p. 37, l. 7. **conceits**, far-fetched, extravagant images.

p. 39, l. 2. **O si sic omnia!** If only all (Ruskin's work) were like this.

p. 40, ll. 19, 20. **Sidonian palaces.** The sea covers all that remains of the wealth and splendour of the ancient ports of Tyre and Sidon. **the keys.** St. Peter, who was a fisherman before he became a disciple of Christ, is often represented as holding the keys of heaven. The Pope claims to hold his authority in succession from St. Peter.

p. 40, ll. 28-32. **I seem to fail**, from *In Memoriam*, ii. iv. **the ship, the noise**, *In Memoriam*, ix. and x. **Arthur**, Hallam, whose death inspired the poem.

p. 41, ll. 18, 19. **St. Peter's**, at Rome, the centre of the Papal authority.

p. 41, l. 27. **megalomania**—here used to mean an uncontrolled passion for mere size or extent.

p. 42, l. 8. **Beethoven**, Ludwig van (1770-1827), great German musician.

p. 42, l. 26. **Sartor Resartus**, Carlyle's treatise on the philosophy of clothes.

p. 43, l. 24. **'first state.'** The reference is to engraving or etching, where the impressions decrease in quality as the plate becomes worn by use.

p. 44, l. 1. **il mezzo**, etc. "The mid-point in the road of our life," from the first line of Dante's *Inferno*.

p. 44, l. 7. **old mariner.** The reference is to Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

p. 44, l. 17. '**Oxford graduate.**' On the title-page of *Modern Painters* the authorship is attributed to "A Graduate of Oxford."

### TENNYSON

**Alfred Tennyson** was born at Somersby, Lincolnshire, in 1809. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where in 1829 he won the Chancellor's Medal with a poem on Timbuctoo. His *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published in 1830, and a second volume of *Poems* appeared in 1842, followed by *The Princess* in 1847. On Wordsworth's death, in 1850, he accepted the Laureateship. Henceforward he commanded general homage as the greatest—certainly the most popular—poet of his age. He was raised to the peerage in 1884, and on his death in 1892 received a public funeral in Westminster Abbey. In later years his poetry met with undeserved neglect on the score of its alleged insipidity and smug acceptance of the existing order. But this was nothing more than a temporary reaction, and Tennyson's claim to rank among the loftiest of our singers has never been seriously disputed.

p. 46, l. 6. **Pope**, Alexander (1688-1744), the acknowledged master of the cold but brilliant heroic couplet, the favourite verse-form of his century. Any reader who consults a "Dictionary of Quotations" will be surprised to see how many familiar lines and phrases he owes to Pope.

p. 46, ll. 12-20. **flower**. These lines contain a series of allusions to Tennyson's poem *The Flower*, a "little fable" of the poet's achievement and its reception.

p. 46, l. 18. **Marsyas**. According to Greek legend, Marsyas was rash enough to challenge Apollo, the god of music, to a contest, the victor to be free to do what he pleased with the vanquished. The Muses declared Apollo to be the better player, and he flayed Marsyas alive as a punishment for his presumption.

p. 47, l. 3. '**The Doctor,**' Doctor Johnson

p. 47, l. 5. **lèse-majesté**, treason, or offensive conduct or language towards the sovereign.

p. 47, l. 18. **Hugo**, Victor (1802-1885), the great romantic poet, novelist, and dramatist of nineteenth-century France.

p. 47, l. 25 **Swinburne**, Algernon Charles (1837-1909). See p. 89.

p. 47, l. 27. **some are pretty enough**, from the last verse of *The Flower*.

p. 48, l. 27. **prepenſe**, planned beforehand, aforethought, intentional; usually occurs only in this particular phrase.

p. 50, l. 20. **Lycidas**, Milton's superb elegy on a friend drowned at sea.

p. 50, l. 31. **Il Penseroso**. The metre of this is familiar to all:

But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,  
Hail, divinest Melancholy!

p. 50, l. 31. **Marvell**, Andrew (1621-1678), poet and diplomatist, once one of Cromwell's secretaries and the friend of Milton. The poem mentioned begins

How vainly men themselves amaze  
To win the palm, the oak or bays.

p. 50, l. 32. **Elegy on Thyrza**. This begins in the following metre:

And thou art dead, as young and fair  
As aught of mortal birth.

p. 51, l. 1. **Genevieve**.

Maid of my love, sweet Genevieve!  
In Beauty's light you glide along.

p. 52, l. 25. **Yet**, etc. This is the third quatrain of Shakespeare's Sonnet XXIX.

p. 53, l. 19. **Pindar** (about 520-422 B.C.), Greek lyric poet. **Sappho** (611-592 B.C.), Greek poetess, of whose works only a few beautiful fragments remain.

p. 54, l. 8. **Gray's Elegy**, the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray (1716-1771).

p. 54, l. 20. **Burns**, Robert (1759-1796), the national poet of Scotland.

p. 55, l. 20. **assert eternal Providence**, from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, i. 25-26.

p. 55, l. 30. **Darwinian.** Charles Darwin (1809-1882) aroused violent controversy with his *Origin of Species* (1859), formulating the theory of evolution and natural selection which now bears his name. For a Tennysonian reference, see *In Memoriam*, cxvii.

p. 56, l. 21. "**faintly trusting.**" See *In Memoriam*, lv., last line.

p. 59, ll. 21, 22. **the Dragon** was the ancient British standard, and King Arthur's helmet bore it as a crest. **White Horse**, another early national symbol, huge representations of which are still to be seen cut in the chalk of several English hillsides.

p. 59, ll. 24-26. **Berserker**, Scandinavian heroes, renowned for their wild frenzy in battle. **Grand Monarque**, Louis XIV. of France (1638-1715), the etiquette of whose Court was elaborate in the extreme.

p. 60, l. 3. **Malory**, Sir Thomas (about 1430-1470), wrote the great prose romance of the Knights of the Round Table, but practically nothing else is known about him.

p. 60, ll. 23, 24. **Hypatia**, by Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), describes the early conflict between the Christians and the pagans of Alexandria. **Romola**, by George Eliot (1819-1880), is a tale of the times of Savonarola, the Italian reformer of the fifteenth century. **Middlemarch**, another novel by the same author, deals with English country life of her own times. **Helbeck**, a novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851-1920), niece of Matthew Arnold.

p. 61, l. 2. **bowdlerised**, expurgated, removed objectionable passages from. Dr. Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825) issued mutilated editions of Shakespeare and Gibbon.

p. 61, l. 10. '**derring-do**,' warlike or chivalrous exploits.

p. 61, l. 25. **faux pas**, French for false steps, indiscretions.

p. 61, l. 32. **Rape of the Lock**, Pope's mock epic on the theft of a lock of a lady's hair.

p. 65, l. 22. **Bacchantic** here means impassioned, like the songs of the worshippers of Bacchus, god of wine.



p. 65, l. 24. **pot-pourri**, applied to literature or music, means a medley. In cookery it is a mixed stew.

p. 65, l. 32-p. 66 l. 1. **Eugene Aram** (1704-1759), a Yorkshire schoolmaster who committed a murder which was only revealed fourteen years later. Bulwer Lytton wrote a romance centring round his curious personality, and Thomas Hood's poem is even better known.

p. 66, l. 13. **Manchester school**. The opposition to the Corn Laws in the 'forties of last century centred in Manchester, its leaders being Richard Cobden and John Bright. The same school afterwards showed a curiously unenlightened hostility to what are now considered the essentials of factory legislation.

p. 67, l. 2. **Catullus** (87-47 B.C.), author of some of the finest love poems in Roman literature.

p. 67, l. 5. **Æolic**, this Greek dialect was used by some of the finest lyric poets, such as Sappho.

p. 67, l. 30. "**Come down.**" Lord Curzon, speaking on Tennyson at a meeting of the British Academy in 1909, said: "This poem recalls to me an occasion when I had the good fortune to be the guest of Lord Tennyson at his house in the country, and when he recited this song among many others. When he came to the last three lines—

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees

I remember that he said they were the three most beautiful lines that he had written, and he hoped that they would be regarded as amongst the most beautiful in the English language."

p. 68, ll. 9-10. **Twa Corbies**, *i.e.* The Two Ravens. This and **O Waly, Waly** and **Fair Helen** are old Scots ballads whose authorship is unknown. "Waly" is an exclamation of grief. All these poems may be found in the *Golden Treasury*. **Land o' the Leal**, by Lady Nairn (1766-1845). "Leal" means loyal, faithful, and the "land o' the leal" is Heaven. **John Anderson**, by Robert Burns.

p. 68, l. 13. **Althea**, a poem by the Cavalier poet,

Richard Lovelace (1618-1658), entitled *To Althea from Prison*, containing the famous lines :

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage.

p. 68, l. 16. **Music that gentlier**, from the Choric Song in *The Lotos-Eaters*.

p. 68, ll. 22-24. **Scots wha hae**—"Scots wha hae (who have) wi' Wallace bled"—Burns's great patriotic song. **A man's a man**. Burns's vigorous poem asserting the essential equality and brotherhood of men in spite of the distinctions of rank and wealth. **Duncan Gray**, also by Burns.

p. 69, ll. 22-27. **"Take, Oh! take,"** from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Act IV. Sc. I. **"Come away,"** from *Twelfth Night*, Act. II. Sc. iv. 4. **"J'aime mieux,"** Old French song, "I love my darling better, O!" **"Full fathom five,"** from *The Tempest*, Act I. Sc. II. **"Tell me where,"** from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III. Sc. II.

p. 70, l. 2. **cantabile**, a musical term for a smooth flowing style suitable for singing.

p. 70, ll. 16-18. **"linked sweetness"** and **"melting voice,"** both from Milton's *L'Allegro*.

p. 70, l. 23. **Lushington** (1811-1893), distinguished Greek scholar, Tennyson's contemporary and friend at Cambridge. He later married Cecilia, Tennyson's sister.

p. 71, l. 3. **ethos**, characteristic tone or mentality.

p. 71, l. 5. **Theocritus** (285-247 B.C.), Greek poet whose rustic episodes are delightfully simple and appealing. **Tasso**, Torquato (1544-1595), Italian poet. His masterpiece was the noble *Jerusalem Delivered*.

p. 71, l. 9. **Botticelli**, Sandro (1446-1510), famous Florentine painter. **Raffaello**, or Raphael, Sanzio (1483-1520), the sublime Italian painter whose works adorn St. Peter's and the Vatican in Rome.

p. 71, l. 32. **Bion and Moschus**, Greek pastoral poets.

p. 72, ll. 28-29. **Pecksniff**, a character in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the type of the sanctimonious hypocrite. **Becky Sharp**, the clever, unscrupulous young woman who

is the chief figure in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. **Mrs. Poyser**, the shrewd, talkative, and witty farmer's wife in George Eliot's *A laam Bedou*.

p. 73, ll. 17-18. **Priam**, King of Troy in Homer's *Iliad*. **Troilus**, one of his sons, the lover of the faithless Cressida.

p. 73, l. 21. **Doric**, an ancient Greek musical mode or key, especially suited to religious or martial ceremonies.

p. 73, l. 27. **Handel**, George Frederick (1685-1759), illustrious German composer, who spent most of his life in England. A celebrated funeral march comes from his *Saul*.

p. 75, l. 6. **Helen of Kirkconnell**, the same as *Fair Helen* mentioned above.

#### HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH POETRY.

This portion, written ten years later, is a revision and modification of the preceding estimate.

p. 79, l. 6. **Cowper**, William (1731-1800), author of *The Task*, a fresh, natural, and deeply religious poet whose life was marred by insanity. **Crabbe**, George (1754-1832), famous for his realistic narrative poems of rural life.

p. 79, ll. 15-16. **esoteric illuminist**. An illuminist is one who claims special enlightenment, spiritual or intellectual. Esoteric (literally "interior") knowledge is the knowledge of inner secrets which are only revealed to few.

p. 79, l. 17. **divining rod**, a wooden rod which in the hands of certain people is said to indicate the presence of water or metals under the ground.

p. 81, l. 18. **a grievous fault**, adapted from *Julius Caesar*, Act III. Sc. II. ll. 84, 85.

p. 82, l. 13. **Æschylus** (525-456 B.C.), Greek tragedian. See pp. 93-101.

p. 82, l. 29. **Horace** (65-8 B.C.), perhaps the most familiar of all Roman poets.

p. 83, l. 14. **Baedeker**, a well-known German series of guide-books.

p. 83, l. 20. **Madame de Staël** (1766-1817), a brilliant French descriptive writer whose chief works were the fruit

of long exile. **Rousseau**, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778), whose romantic writings evoked almost throughout Europe a cult for Nature in her grandest and wildest aspects.

p. 85, l. 18. '**the general**,' i.e. the general public, as in *Hamlet*, Act II. Sc. II, l. 457.

p. 86, l. 13. **neuropathic**, suffering from nervous trouble.

p. 86, l. 22. **si qua** (Virgil), if somehow he could evade the harsh decree of Fate.

p. 87, ll. 20-21. **Campbell**, Thomas (1777-1844), better remembered for a few stirring poems than for his masterpiece *The Pleasures of Hope*. **Landor**, Walter Savage (1775-1864), a voluminous writer, now strangely neglected. The exquisite *Rose Aylmer* and a few epigrams ensure his fame.

p. 89, l. 5. **Meredith**, George (1828-1909), novelist and poet. This opinion hardly does justice to such imperishable works as his *Love in the Valley* and *Modern Love*.

p. 89, l. 17. **Swinburne** knew his own mannerisms, and even parodied them in one of his poems.

p. 89, l. 29. **tarantula**. The tarantula is a venomous spider found in Italy, and its poison causes wild movements of the body which are supposed to be imitated in a Neapolitan dance properly called the tarantella. The word here refers to the dance.

p. 90, l. 5. **silver age**, a time of decline as compared with the achievements of the Golden Age.

p. 90, l. 16. **hors concours**, beyond competition.

## ON THE ATTIC DRAMA

p. 94, ll. 18-20. **Miltiades**, one of the leaders of the Athenians in their victory over the Persians at Marathon (490 B.C.). **Themistocles** (about 514-449 B.C.). He brought about the defeat of the Persians by the Athenians in the naval battle of Salamis (480 B.C.). **Aristeides**, another of the Greek generals, whose uprightness gained him the name of "the Just." **Thucydides** (471-401 B.C.), the celebrated Greek historian, was banished for failure in a military expedition, and wrote his splendid work in exile. **Alcibiades** (450-404 B.C.), gifted Athenian statesman and general, a

close friend of Socrates. **Socrates** (469-399 B.C.) also distinguished himself in war, but is chiefly famous as a philosopher and through the story of his trial and death as related by Plato. **Xenophon** (444-359 B.C.), Athenian general and historian, whose *Anabasis* describes the retreat of the 10,000 Greeks whom he led safely home from Persia. **Pheidias** (490-432 B.C.), a Greek sculptor whose statues ranked among the wonders of the world. The "Elgin Marbles," now in the British Museum, were among his masterpieces. **Plato** (429-347 B.C.), the renowned Greek philosopher, whose *Dialogues* and *Republic* have been studied with admiration by all succeeding ages. The fate of Socrates caused him to leave Athens for a long time. **Euripides** (480-406 B.C.), see pp. 101-106. Envy and detraction dogged his career in Athens, and he left the city for Macedonia.

p. 94, ll. 23-24. **Cervantes**, Miguel de (1547-1616), author of the world-famed Spanish classic *Don Quixote*, lost one hand while fighting the Turks at Lepanto. **Camoëns**, Luis de (1524-1579), wrote the Portuguese epic, the *Lusiad*.

p. 96, l. 6. **Herodotus** (about 484-424 B.C.), the greatest and most entertaining of Greek historians.

p. 96, l. 8. **Boccaccio**, Giovanni (1313-1375), the Italian author of the *Decameron*, a renowned collection of stories from which Shakespeare himself drew inspiration. **Giotto** (1276-1336), painter and architect, originally a shepherd boy, whose surviving works are among the chief glories of Italy.

p. 97, ll. 3, 4. **Cicero** (106-143 B.C.), Roman orator and philosopher. **Pythagorean**, a follower of Pythagoras, who died about 500 B.C. His name is associated with the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

p. 98, l. 2. **Latimer**, Hugh (1485-1555), Bishop of Worcester, was burnt at the stake as a heretic. **Cromwell**, Oliver (1599-1658), the great leader of the Parliamentary party in the Civil War.

p. 98, ll. 8, 9. **Coriolanus**, an exiled Roman patrician who joined the Volscians and marched on the city. The entreaties of his mother and wife caused him to withdraw, and, according to Shakespeare, the Volscians slew him.

**Camillus** was a successful Roman general, five times dictator of the Republic. **Fabricius**, another brilliant soldier, even more famous for his contempt of luxury and wealth. **Cato** (234-149 B.C.), soldier, statesman, and writer, showed the like simplicity and austerity. He opposed Julius Caesar, and stabbed himself rather than fall into his hands.

p. 98, l. 17. **Dithyrambic**, originally a kind of lyric poetry in honour of Bacchus, the word thus coming to be applied to passionate verse of irregular form.

p. 99, l. 13. **Friend of Man**. Prometheus was credited by the Athenians with having taught mankind most of the useful arts. A victim of the anger of the gods, he lay bound to a rock on Mount Caucasus, tormented by a vulture, until released by Hercules.

p. 99, ll. 15-30. **Beacon fire**, announcing the return of Agamemnon, King of Argos, from Troy. Cassandra foresees and prophesies his doom, but it is her lot always to be disbelieved, and she shares the king's fate at the hands of his false wife, Clytemnestra.

p. 100, l. 4. **Aristophanes** (448-380 B.C.), the supreme comic poet of the ancient world. See pp. 108-110.

p. 100, ll. 5-8. **Comte**, Auguste (1798-1857), founder of the Positive school of philosophy of which Frederic Harrison was so prominent an adherent. See Morley's *Oracles on Man and Government*. **Lafitte**, a distinguished French publisher.

p. 102, l. 15. **Praxiteles** brought Greek sculpture to its perfection in the fourth century B.C.

p. 103, l. 19. **Apocalypse**, literally an uncovering; a sublime revelation.

p. 103, l. 20. **Calderon de la Barca**, Pedro (1600-1681), Spain's greatest dramatist, an amazingly prolific writer.

p. 104, l. 28. **Otway**, Thomas (1651-1685), chiefly remembered for his tragedy *Venice Preserved*.

p. 104, l. 31. **scholars of our age**. The reference is to Prof. Gilbert Murray, who has published memorable translations of the Greek masterpieces.

p. 105, ll. 13, 14. **Marlowe**, Christopher (1563-1593), one

of the most powerful of the Elizabethan dramatists. **Ibsen**, Henrik (1828-1906), Norwegian playwright, whose works have had an immense influence on the modern drama. **Richardson**, Samuel (1689-1761), the London printer-novelist whose *Pamela* was the literary sensation of his time.

p. 105, l. 29. **Voltaire**, François Marie Arouet de (1694-1778), the French writer most dreaded by all the foes of liberty and enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe.

p. 106, l. 11. **Tolstoy**, Count Leo (1828-1911), whose novels won him universal renown, devoted much of his genius and possessions to the emancipation of the Russian people.

p. 107, l. 20. **Dance of Death**, a familiar set of mediaeval pictures showing Death as a skeleton interrupting his victims of every degree in the midst of their pleasures or occupations.

p. 107, l. 24. "**Wash you**," from the Book of *Isaiah*, i. 16 onward.

p. 109, l. 13. **Rabelais**, François (1483-1553), wrote the companion books of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, an amazing medley of wit, satire, wisdom, and legend, marred by extreme coarseness and irreverence.

p. 109, ll. 31-32. **Menander** (345-293 B.C.), a Greek comic poet, of whose work only fragments remain. **Plautus** (254-184 B.C.), a favourite Roman comic dramatist, second only to **Terence** (194-158 B.C.), who rose from slavery to become the most sparkling and elegant of Roman playwrights.

## GIBBON

**Edward Gibbon** was born at Putney in 1737, and was sent to Oxford at the age of fifteen. A year later his conversion to the Church of Rome forced him to leave the University, and he was sent to Switzerland, where he reverted to his former faith and began the studies which were later to win him undying renown. In 1758 he returned home and spent some time as a captain in the Hampshire militia, until its disbandment set him free to travel once more. As his autobiography tells us: "It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the

Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started into my mind." Several years, however, and his first few sessions as an inarticulate Member of Parliament, lay between the conception and its magnificent execution on a far greater scale. Though the first volume appeared in 1776, he did not, in his own words, "take everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion" until June 1787, when he had spent another four years in Switzerland, where he remained until 1793. He died in London in January 1794.

p. 111, l. 23. **Peg Woffington** (1714-1760), noted actress, who played many high-comedy parts with great success. **Wilkes**, John (1727-1797), a bold politician who earned the disfavour of the Government by championing the cause of the people. They refused to accept his election to the House of Commons, and he was three times expelled and re-elected.

p. 113, l. 2. **Lord Sheffield** (1735-1821), statesman, now chiefly famous for his connection with Gibbon.

p. 113, ll. 25, 26. **Deyverdun**, Gibbon's companion, in whose house he lived at Lausanne from 1783 onwards. Deyverdun died in 1789. **the Neckers**. Jacques Necker (1732-1804), French statesman and financier, was the husband of Suzanne Curchod, whom Gibbon himself would have married but for his father's opposition. Their daughter was the celebrated Madame de Staël (see p. 231).

p. 114, l. 3. **Boswell**, James (1740-1795), the author of the finest of English biographies, *The Life of Dr. Johnson*.

p. 115, l. 23. **Morison**, James Cotter (1832-1888), biographer and Positivist writer, a friend of Frederic Harrison.

p. 116, l. 9. **totus, teres**, complete, smooth, and rounded (Virgil).

p. 116, l. 26. **Zeus**. This colossal image, made for the temple of Zeus at Olympia, has been called the highest creation ever achieved by the plastic art of Greece.

p. 117, ll. 22-29. **Livy** (59 B.C.-A.D. 17) wrote the history of Rome in 142 books, of which only 35 remain. His work is likened to the **chansons de geste**, or ballads of the brave



feats of old-time heroes, because like the Italian **improvisatore** he allowed his own imagination and dramatic sense the fullest liberty. The terseness and sobriety of the *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) afford a remarkable contrast. The age of the Emperor Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14), the patron of Virgil and Horace, is one of the most memorable periods in literary history.

p. 118, l. 3. **muses.** Each of the nine books of Herodotus is named after one of the Muses.

p. 118, l. 10. **Plutarch** (about A.D. 46-120) wrote the *Parallel Lives*, a wonderful series of brief biographies of famous Greeks and Romans.

p. 118, l. 32. **Tacitus** (about A.D. 55-130) was the master of brief and penetrating phrases which make his *Annals* one of the most impressive of all historical writings.

p. 119, l. 1. **Comines**, Philippe de (1445-1511), French statesman and historian. **Bacon**, Francis (1561-1626), one of the greatest of English philosophers and statesmen, whose *Essays* and other works are masterpieces of erudition, scientific reasoning, and worldly wisdom.

p. 119, ll. 20-27. **Machiavelli**, Nicolo (1469-1527), the Florentine historian and diplomat who wrote *The Prince*, a treatise on government long famous (or infamous) for the crafty and unscrupulous practices it recommended to those in power. **Hobbes**, Thomas (1588-1679), discussed in his *Leviathan* the origin and end of power in the State. **Montesquieu**, Baron de (1689-1755), wrote the *Spirit of Laws*, which had an immense effect on political and legal thought in Europe. The scholarship and activities of **Leibnitz**, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646-1716), were almost universal in their scope. **Vico**, Giovanni Battista (1668-1744), is considered the founder of the philosophy of history by reason of his work on the evolution of civilisation and law. **Pascal**, Blaise (1623-1662), French philosopher and scientist, author of the brilliant *Provincial Letters* attacking the Order of the Jesuits, and of the profound and sombre *Reflections* published after his death. **Condorcet**, Marquis de (1743-1794), expressed the loftiest moral principles in his life as well as in his writings. Like so many of the men most devoted to

the popular cause in the French Revolution, he was ultimately one of its victims. While in hiding he wrote his *Progress of the Human Mind* (see p. 152).

p. 120, l. 3. **Robertson**, William (1721-1793), Scottish divine and historian, Principal of Edinburgh University.

p. 120, ll. 26-28. **Martin**, Henri (1810-1883), a prolific and fervently patriotic French historian. **Grote**, George (1794-1871), a banker by profession, wrote a fine *History of Greece*. The masterpiece of **Milman**, Henry Hart (1791-1868), Dean of St. Paul's, poet and historian, was his *History of Latin Christianity*. **Heeren**, A. H. L. (1760-1842), was a German historian of both the ancient and the modern world and **Becker**, W. A. (1796-1846), studied the social life of Greece and Rome. **Ranke**, Leopold von (1795-1886), is renowned for his *History of the Popes*. **Freeman**, Edward Augustus (1823-1892), won his chief fame in the field of early English history, notably with his *History of the Norman Conquest*.

p. 121, l. 25. **most versatile**, Andrew Lang (1844-1912), a gifted Scottish writer whose talents were amazingly many-sided.

p. 121, l. 30. **A famous authority**. The leader of the "aesthetes," Oscar Wilde (1856-1900).

p. 122, l. 7. "**strange stories**," a misquotation of "sad stories of the death of kings," *Richard II*. Act III. II, l. 156.

p. 124, ll. 2-3. **Guizot**, François Pierre Guillaume (1787-1874), French statesman, author of several important works on French and English history, and translator of Shakespeare. **Michelet**, Jules (1798-1874), produced a monumental *History of France* and numerous shorter treatises. **Froude**, James Anthony (1818-1894), was a historian of unusually high literary quality, most attractively displayed in his studies of the England of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. **Green**, John Richard (1837-1883), approached his subject from a new angle, and his *History of the English People* proved one of the most successful and popular of modern works.

p. 124, ll. 18, 19. **Pelions upon Ossa**. In the legend of the war between the Gods and the Titans, the latter are said

to have piled Mount Pelion on top of Mount Ossa in order to climb up to the skies to reach their enemies.

p. 125, ll. 4-7. **Bavius**. Bavius and Mævius are mentioned by Virgil and Horace as writers of bad verse, very jealous of better men. Their names are often used in satire to represent dull or incompetent scribblers.

## THE USE OF HISTORY

p. 126, l. 7. **Gradgrinds**. Thomas Gradgrind is an iron-master in Dickens' *Hard Times*. He is a man without sentiment, to whom nothing but facts and figures makes any appeal. **Jack Cade** headed a rising in Kent, defeated the king's troops, and entered London in 1450. He was killed shortly afterwards.

p. 128, l. 13. **Robert Owen** (1771-1858), socialist and philanthropist, who devoted much time and money to establishing communities which practised the system he advocated.

p. 129, l. 15. **Adam Smith** (1723-1790) founded the science of political economy with his epoch-making book *The Wealth of Nations*. See pp. 173, 174.

p. 131, l. 31. **Babel**, from *Genesis* ii. 9.

p. 133, l. 19. **Fielding**, Henry (1707-1754), a London magistrate, celebrated as the author of several robust novels, of which the most popular is *Tom Jones*.

p. 134, l. 1. **Titus Oates** (1649-1705) fabricated a story of a widespread Roman Catholic plot against Charles II., and thus brought about the imprisonment and death of many innocent people.

p. 134, l. 19. **Newgate Calendar**, a publication once very popular, containing biographical accounts of the most notorious criminals confined in the great London prison.

p. 135, l. 16. **Overbury** (1581-1613), minor poet and courtier of the reign of James I., poisoned in the Tower of London by personal enemies.

p. 137, l. 27. **Hudibras** is the title and hero of the vigorous anti-Puritan verse satire by Samuel Butler (1612-1680).

p. 138, l. 7. **Faraday**, Michael (1791-1867), renowned for his electrical researches. The standard unit of electrical capacity is called, from his name, a farad.

p. 139, l. 6. "**The proper study**," the second line of Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epistle II.

p. 139, l. 13. **Galileo** (1564-1642), the Italian astronomer whose discoveries and observations challenged all contemporary theories of the universe, and cost him long and bitter persecution.

p. 139, l. 32. **Bushmen**, nomads who inhabit the South African deserts, now believed to be the degenerate descendants of an enlightened prehistoric race.

p. 144, l. 10. **Luther**, Martin (1483-1546), himself a Roman Catholic priest in Germany, established the principles of the Reformation.

p. 144, l. 22. **Prætorian guards**, the imperial bodyguard formed by the Emperor Augustus. During the Second Empire in France, to which these lines refer, Napoleon III. created a magnificent regiment of the same kind.

p. 144, ll. 29, 30. **rotten boroughs**, abolished by the Reform Bill of 1832, were places which had scarcely any population, but returned members to Parliament when thriving towns were unrepresented. The **Test Acts** imposed religious tests on all government officials, whether civil or military.

p. 146, l. 17. **vestryman**, a member of the body of rate-payers called the vestry, conducting the affairs of a parish.

p. 150, l. 32. **Charlemagne** (742-814), King of the Franks and ultimately master of Europe. **Alfred** (849-901), England's first lawgiver and the conqueror of the Danes.

p. 151, l. 22. **French republican**, Danton (1759-1794), one of the foremost orators of the Revolution, who himself went to the guillotine.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

p. 153, l. 8. **Teufelsdröckh**, the imaginary German professor to whom Carlyle attributes the philosophy of *Sartor Resartus*.

p. 153, l. 10. **Friedrich**, Frederick the Great of Prussia, of whom Carlyle wrote a monumental *Life*.

p. 153, l. 11. **Invectives**. The author has in mind Burke's dictum, "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people."

p. 154, ll. 15-17. **Mirabeau**, Gabriel, Comte de (1749-1791), a towering figure of the early days of the French Revolution. **Washington** (1732-1799), commander of the American army in the War of Independence and first President of the United States. James **Watt** (1736-1819) was the Scotsman who devised the first practical steam engine; Sir Richard **Arkwright** (1732-1792), originally a hairdresser, was responsible for wonderful improvements in cotton-spinning machinery.

p. 154, l. 24. '**To Mary**,' etc. Both poems are by William Cowper.

p. 154, ll. 25-27. **Reynolds**, Sir Joshua (1723-1792), a prominent member of Dr. Johnson's circle, was the finest portrait-painter of his day. Thomas **Gainsborough** (1727-1788) painted both landscapes and portraits, the latter of surpassing grace and delicacy. John **Flaxman** (1755-1826) was a prolific and masterly sculptor and designer, and Thomas **Stothard** (1755-1834) illustrated many of the classics of English literature. The music of the Austrian composer, Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** (1756-1791) is still performed and admired everywhere.

p. 154, l. 29. **ab extra**, from outside.

p. 155, l. 5. **Lyrical Ballads** (1798), the joint production of Wordsworth and Coleridge, marked the end of the epoch of formality and artificiality in poetry.

p. 155, ll. 6-8. **Newton**, Sir Isaac (1642-1727), world-famous philosopher and mathematician, who discovered the law of gravitation. Sir Christopher **Wren** (1632-1723), something of a universal genius, was the architect of St. Paul's Cathedral and many other of London's noblest buildings. Joseph **Priestley** (1733-1804), the discoverer of oxygen and other gases, underwent much persecution for his religious opinions and his open approval of the French Revolution. (See p. 170.)

p. 155, l. 16. **tropes**. The author here alludes to Carlyle's impassioned and figurative style, fervent as the language of an angry prophet, as he does again on p. 156, l. 16. **Gargantuan**, from the giant in the works of Rabelais, means huge, inordinate.

p. 158, l. 6. **Commune**, the revolutionary party which seized Paris after the siege in 1871.

p. 160, l. 12. **routs**, an old word for fashionable gatherings, at which Joseph Addison (1679-1719) studied the foibles of the day for his essays in the *Spectator*.

p. 160, ll. 13-22. **Hervey**, John Lord (1696-1743), an enemy of Pope, wrote memoirs of the reign of George I., while Horace **Walpole** (1717-1797) collected the annals of the time in his lively and voluminous correspondence. Fanny **Burney** (1752-1840), afterwards Madame D'Arblay, created a sensation, and won her pet name from Dr. Johnson, with her novel *Evelina*, and afterwards compiled a fascinating *Diary*. The ignorant, hard-drinking, but lovable **Squire Western** appears in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The fourth Duke of **Queensberry**, "Old Q" (1724-1810), was notorious for his dissolute life, and the orgies of the **Hell-Fire Club** were conducted at Medmenham Abbey up the Thames. The satirical artist, William Hogarth (1697-1764), depicted a typical debauchee's career in eight engravings entitled **The Rake's Progress**. The authorship of the venomous political *Letters of Junius* has never been established, but they are usually attributed to Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818). **Bedlam** (a corruption of Bethlehem) was a London priory which became a place of confinement for lunatics, **Bridewell** being a prison in Blackfriars. The dreadful sights to be witnessed in both places regularly drew morbid crowds. The pleasure gardens of **Vauxhall** continued to be an attraction until the middle of the nineteenth century, but **Ranelagh** closed in 1804. For a long period London was plagued at night with parties of men who gave themselves the Red Indian name of **Mohawks**, and found pleasure in inflicting every form of outrage and damage on harmless citizens and on property.

p. 161, ll. 1-11. **Steele**, Sir Richard (1671-1729), an Irish

soldier, was associated with Addison in the production of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. The lady to whom he paid the tribute here quoted was the beautiful and philanthropic Lady Elizabeth Hastings.

p. 161, l. 13. **lovable woman**, Sophia Western, the heroine of Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

p. 161, ll. 17-23. Tobias **Smollett** (1721-1771) was another virile novelist, whose name is usually associated with Fielding's. The pictures of life in the eighteenth-century navy in his *Roderick Random* were drawn from his own experience. Maria **Edgeworth** (1767-1849) still retains a certain popularity with her animated Irish stories and "improving" tales for children. **Sandford and Merton**, a story of two schoolboys, by Thomas Day (1748-1789), is so highly edifying that it now provokes nothing but amusement.

p. 161, ll. 25-28. Captain James **Cook** (1728-1779) was the intrepid navigator who took possession of eastern Australia for Britain. James **Brindley** (1716-1772) constructed some 400 miles of the great English canal system. The amazing thing is that he was quite illiterate, and for all his engineering feats relied on sheer power of thought, unaided by figures or drawings. John **Metcalf** (1717-1810), in spite of life-long blindness, was a pioneer road-maker and bridge-builder. Josiah **Wedgwood** (1730-1795), the potter to whom Staffordshire owes its present enormous industry. John **Wesley** (1703-1791) was the great evangelist who founded the Methodist communion. John **Howard** (1726-1790) visited all the penal institutions of Europe in the cause of prison reform. William **Wilberforce** (1759-1833), philanthropist, devoted his energy and wealth to the abolition of the slave-trade.

p. 162, ll. 2, 3. George **Morland** (1730-1797), a masterly painter of English country scenes, who ruined himself, however, by dissipation. James **Thomson** (1700-1748), poet, author of *The Seasons* and other works which began the movement of return to Nature. James **Beattie** (1735-1803), Scottish poet and philosopher, author of *The Minstrel*. William **Somerville** (1675-1742), poet of country life and sports, author of *The Chase*.

p. 162, l. 5. **How jocund**, from Gray's *Elegy*.

p. 162, ll. 18-21. **Locke**, John (1632-1704), established his reputation as one of the leaders of European thought by his *Essay on the Human Understanding*. John **Wallis** (1616-1703) was a celebrated mathematician. Gilbert **Burnet** (1643-1715), Bishop of Salisbury, wrote valuable histories of the Reformation and of his own times. John **Somers** (1651-1716) held high influence with William III. and became Lord Chancellor. The virtuous French Archbishop **Fénelon** (1651-1715), tutor to the grandson of Louis XIV., wrote the classic *Télémaque*. Under Anne and William III., John Churchill, Duke of **Marlborough** (1650-1722) proved himself an unrivalled military leader, and William Bentinck, Earl of **Portland** (1649-1703), was William's chief agent in foreign affairs.

p. 163, l. 7. **Butler**, Joseph (1692-1752), Bishop of Durham, author of the *Analogy of Religion*. Edmund **Halley** (1656-1742), the Astronomer-Royal, discovered the comet known by his name. **Stephen Gray** (d. 1736) made some remarkable early electrical researches, and James **Bradley** (1693-1762) was successor to Halley.

p. 163, ll. 10-20. **Chatham**, the Earl of (1708-1778), the elder William Pitt, was perhaps the greatest of England's orators and war ministers. The French administrator and financier **Turgot** (1727-1781) showed himself too upright and enlightened for his environment. Robert, Lord **Clive** (1725-1774), a young clerk in the service of the East India Company, broke the power of France in India and laid the foundations of British rule. Warren **Hastings** (1732-1818), from similar low beginnings, became India's first Governor-General. Admiral Lord **Rodney** (1719-1792) won brilliant successes over the Spanish and the French, and Lord George **Anson** (1697-1762) was the bold navigator and admiral whose *Voyage Round the World* remains popular to this day. Denis **Diderot** (1713-1784) conceived and carried out, with the help of other famous Frenchmen, the immense *Encyclopædia*. As its articles expressed the most advanced thought of the time, the work and its authors incurred severe opposition from both Church and State. David **Garrick** (1717-1779), the



leading actor of his age, was another of Johnson's intimates. Sir William **Herschel** (1738-1822), the astronomer; Joseph **Black** (1728-1799), the chemist; John **Hunter** (1728-1793), the illustrious surgeon and anatomist; Benjamin **Franklin** (1706-1790), who invented the lightning conductor; and Henry **Cavendish** (1706-1790), who devoted a huge fortune to physical and chemical research, form a brilliant scientific group. Johann Sebastian **Bach** (1685-1750) and Joseph **Haydn** (1732-1809) composed some of the most glorious of musical masterpieces; and George **Whitefield** (1714-1770) and Robert **Raikes** (1735-1811) did evangelistic and social work of the highest order.

<sup>1</sup> p. 163, ll. 31, 32. **Pitt**, William, the younger (1759-1806), became Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four, and led England through the struggle with revolutionary France. His name is indissolubly linked with that of Charles James **Fox** (1749-1806), his most formidable opponent. Henry **Grattan** (1746-1820) was one of the foremost of Irish orators and statesmen. Lord **Cornwallis** (1738-1805), whose capitulation ended the war with America, was afterwards most successful in India. Horatio Lord **Nelson** (1758-1805) died in the hour of his conclusive victory at Trafalgar.

p. 164, ll. 1-4. **Bentham**, Jeremy (1748-1832), the champion of the utilitarian school of thought, strove against many old legal injustices, as did the distinguished lawyer Sir Samuel **Romilly** (1757-1818), who furthered the noble work of Wilberforce and Thomas **Clarkson** (1760-1846) in securing the abolition of slavery. Thomas **Telford** (1757-1834), once a poor Scottish stone-mason, constructed many important bridges and canals, and another Scottish engineer, Robert **Stevenson** (1772-1850), an ancestor of R. L. Stevenson the novelist, was a famous builder of lighthouses. Works containing the wood engravings of Thomas **Bewick** (1753-1828) are very highly valued to-day, and George **Romney** (1734-1802) ranks among the masters of English portraiture. Thousands of men owe their lives to the eminent chemist, Sir Humphry **Davy** (1778-1829), the inventor of the safety lamp used in mines.

p. 164, l. 31-p. 165, l. 5. The men referred to are, in

the same order, Marlborough, Newton, Wren, Berkeley, Dryden, and Pope.

p. 166, l. 4. **Fontenoy**, etc., were all battles in the protracted struggle with France.

p. 166, l. 12. **Walpole**, Sir Robert (1676-1745), a cynical but enlightened statesman and financier, was Prime Minister for over twenty years.

p. 166, l. 20. **First Consul**, the title assumed by Napoleon I. (1769-1821) after his victories as the republican commander in the East.

p. 167, l. 2. **Peel**, Sir Robert (1788-1850), whose name is always associated with the police service he introduced, carried the measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws, the agitation for which had been led by the Free Trade advocate, Richard **Cobden** (1804-1865). William Ewart **Gladstone** (1809-1898), four times Prime Minister, was the foremost Liberal leader of the century.

p. 169, ll. 13-16. **Crompton**, Samuel (1753-1827), invented the spinning-mule, which he generously gave to the public. The best-known of the many achievements of John **Smeaton** (1724-1792) is the Eddystone lighthouse. The Duke of **Bridgewater** (1736-1803) began the development of the English canal system which was laid out by Brindley. John **Dollond** (1706-1761), and other members of the same family, invented several valuable optical instruments.

p. 170, ll. 4-10. **Darwin**, Erasmus (1731-1802), grandfather of Charles Darwin, was a physician and philosopher, as well as a poet of no mean order. **Matthew Boulton** (1728-1809) was the partner whose business ability ensured Watt's success, and they had an excellent assistant in William **Murdoch** (1754-1839). William **Hutton** (1723-1815), one of Priestley's friends, opened the first circulating library and wrote several works on local history. John **Baskerville** (1706-1775) was considered the finest of contemporary printers, and Richard Lovell **Edgeworth** (1744-1817) was deeply interested in educational subjects and in the development of a system of telegraphy.

p. 170, ll. 22, 23. **Gutenberg** (1400-1468), the inventor of printing. Christopher **Columbus** (1447-1506), the discoverer of America.

p. 171, ll. 16-22. Jean **D'Alembert** (1717-1783) was a foundling, who grew up to be a supreme mathematician and Diderot's associate on the *Encyclopaedia*. The Comte de **Buffon** (1707-1788) devoted his life to natural history and wrote, or rather began, a work then unrivalled (see p. 173). The Swedish scientist, Carl von **Linnaeus** (1707-1778), founded modern botany, and modern chemistry owes an immense debt to Antoine Laurent **Lavoisier** (1743-1794), who perished in the French Revolution. French science can also claim the glory of the Marquis de **Laplace** (1749-1827), a famous astronomer; the Chevalier de **Lamarck** (1744-1829), zoologist and botanist; and the Comte de **Lagrange** (1736-1813), astronomer and author of a standard work on mechanics. The name of a pioneer of electrical research, Alessandro **Volta** (1745-1827), is perpetuated in several electrical terms, as is that of Luigi **Galvani** (1737-1798), who discovered the principle of animal electricity. François Xavier **Bichat** (1771-1802), though he died so young, is numbered among the masters of physiology. The German dramatic poet, Gotthold Ephraim **Lessing** (1729-1781), is best remembered for his *Laocoön*, a critical work on painting and poetry.

p. 173, l. 14. **histology**, the branch of biology which deals with the structure of the tissues of living organisms.

p. 174, l. 16. **Eripuit**, etc. "He snatched the lightning from the sky and the sceptre from the tyrants." These words appear on a medal struck in Franklin's honour, and allude to his experiment of leading a lightning flash to earth by means of a kite, and to his part in securing American independence.

p. 174, l. 26. **eureka**, "I have found it." The Greek Archimedes (B.C. 287-212) is said to have run straight from his bath into the streets, uttering this cry, when he hit upon the principle of specific gravity.

p. 175, l. 4. **Banks**, Sir Joseph (1743-1820), the eminent

man of science who accompanied Captain Cook on his voyage of exploration. Louis de **Bougainville** (1739-1811) was the French counterpart of Cook.

p. 175, l. 22. **Briareus**, a mythical giant with a hundred hands and fifty heads, son of Earth and Sky.

p. 176, l. 18. **Kepler**, Johann (1571-1630), formulated the laws governing the motions of planets. René **Descartes** (1596-1650), author of the Cartesian system of philosophy, expressed his fundamental principle in the phrase "I think, therefore I am."

p. 176, l. 31. **Harvey**, William (1578-1657), immortal as the discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

p. 178, l. 5. **Vauvenargues**, Marquis de (1715-1747), a profound moralist, though most of his life was spent as a soldier. Lord Morley never wearied of quoting his "Great thoughts come from the heart."

p. 178, l. 13. **Hegel**, G. W. F. (1770-1831), an abstruse but extremely influential German philosopher. Friedrich von **Schiller** (1759-1805) comes second only to Goethe among German poets.

p. 178, l. 22. **One who**, etc., John Ruskin.

p. 179, ll. 3-11. **Radcliffe**, John (1650-1714), a famous royal physician, who founded the Radcliffe Library at Oxford. Baron William **Dupuytren** (1777-1835), the principal French surgeon of his day. Robert **Boyle** (1626-1691) devoted his life and wealth to experimental natural science and founded what became the Royal Society. Hermann **Boerhaave** (1668-1738) was a Dutch scientist and doctor of remarkable versatility. John **Ray** (1628-1705) was one of the most accomplished and methodical of English naturalists. George **Cuvier** (1769-1832), famous for his classification of the animal kingdom and the advances in the sciences of comparative anatomy and geology due to his labours. The political theories of James **Harrington** (1611-1677) were given publicity in his account of the imaginary commonwealth of *Oceana*. The daring adventurer, statesman, and scholar, Sir Walter **Raleigh** (1552-1618), wrote his *History of the World* during twelve years' imprisonment in the Tower.

p. 180, l. 1. **the vision**, etc., from Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book 1.

p. 181, l. 29. **short and simple**, etc., from Gray's *Elegy*.

p. 181, l. 32. **Collins**, William (1721-1779), the author of poems comparatively few in number, but of unusual grace and feeling.

p. 182, l. 6. **nobler progeny**. The reference is to Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

p. 183, ll. 4, 5. **Crome**, John (1769-1821), an exquisite landscape painter. Thomas **Chippendale** designed furniture which is highly prized, and Francesco **Bartolozzi** (1730-1815) produced innumerable delightful engravings.

p. 184, l. 8. **Gluck**, Christopher (1712-1787), a German composer, whose success in Paris caused a feud between his supporters and those of Nicolo **Piccini** (1728-1800), a rival musician (see l. 22).

p. 184, l. 11. **Sistine**, the Pope's chapel in the Vatican, magnificently adorned by the paintings of Michael Angelo.

p. 184, ll. 21, 22. **Buononcini**, Giovanni, an Italian musician, settled in London and was for some time very popular. **Farinelli** and **Caffarelli** were rival singers of international renown.

p. 184, l. 25. **Red and Green**. The political factions of Byzantium took their names from the colours they wore, and their fierce contests in the sixth century periodically distracted the city.

p. 185, l. 3. **Hallelujah Chorus**, from Handel's *Messiah*.

p. 185, l. 19. **Captain Coram** (1668-1751) opened the Foundling Hospital in London. **Jonas Hanway** (1712-1786), while connected with many noble philanthropic undertakings, is chiefly remembered as the pioneer of the umbrella in England.

p. 187, l. 1. **greatest happiness**. According to Bentham this is "the foundation of morals and legislation." The phrase occurs in a work on crime and punishment, by Cesare Beccaria (1735-1793), which altered the criminal law of Europe.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

p. 188, l. 12. **Que son**, etc. This may be freely rendered as :

His merit's famous far and wide !  
 What grace ! What dignity !  
 How thoroughly self-satisfied  
 His lordship ought to be !

p. 190, l. 6. **Sherbrooke**, Lord (1811-1892), Robert<sup>t</sup> Lowe, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary. Not long before this lecture was delivered he had been raised to the peerage. Some too optimistic speech had evidently roused a Frederic Harrison's hostility.

p. 190, l. 21. **Figaro**, a character who is a barber in *Le Barbier de Séville* and a valet in *Le Mariage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais (1732-1799). The satire put into his mouth did much to express the public scorn of existing institutions.

p. 191, l. 23. **men of genius**, John Ruskin.

p. 191, l. 29. **Gray's bard**. The poem is a prophetic denunciation of Edward I. by a Welsh bard whose country the king is invading.

p. 191, l. 30. **St. George**. Ruskin formed this organisation to counter what he held to be the baser ideals and methods of the modern industrial system.

p. 194, l. 15. **St. Louis**, Louis IX. of France (1215-1270), whose justice, generosity, and piety won him the reputation of a saint even in his lifetime.

p. 195, l. 7. **Froissart**, Jean (1337-1410), a French courtier who visited England, Scotland, Spain, and Flanders, and compiled his picturesque if not very accurate *Chronicles*.

p. 196, ll. 4, 5. The **Mediaevalists** advocated a return to the handicrafts and the simpler standards of living of the Middle Ages. The **Æsthetes** were a familiar butt for the satire of the time, owing to their affectation of absorption in questions of art and beauty.

p. 197, l. 18. **Prime Minister**. This alludes to Gladstone's usual terse communications written on postcards.

p. 199, l. 25. **Copernicus**, Nicolas (1473-1543), the Prussian astronomer who propounded the modern system of astronomy.

p. 200, l. 1. **Thomson**, William, Lord Kelvin (1824-1908), whose inventions and researches in every branch of science won him world renown.

p. 200, l. 22. **Alfieri**, Count Vittorio (1749-1803), was a famous Italian dramatic poet, and the chief work of Alain René **Le Sage** (1668-1747) was the lively novel *Gil Blas*.

p. 200, l. 30. **Rubens**, Sir Peter Paul (1577-1640), the supreme Flemish painter, and his pupil, Sir Anthony **Van Dyke** (1599-1641) worked in England for Charles I. **Hans Holbein** (1447-1543) was born in Germany, but most of his splendid portraits were painted at the court of Henry VIII.

p. 201, l. 15. **Peribanou** is an all-powerful fairy who appears in the *Arabian Nights*.

p. 202, l. 12. **Saint-Simon**, Duc de (1675-1755), was thought the most accomplished noble of the court of Louis XIV., which he described in his famous *Memoirs*.

p. 202, l. 18. **Rambler**, a periodical conducted by Dr. Johnson.

p. 202, l. 21. **Sidney**, Sir Philip (1554-1586), poet and "perfect knight," a favourite of Queen Elizabeth, of almost legendary charm and courage.

p. 202, ll. 23, 24. **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452-1579), Italian painter, architect, anatomist, engineer, etc., one of the world's most versatile geniuses. Michael Angelo **Buonarroti** (1474-1563), the magnificent painter and sculptor whose works adorn the Vatican in Rome. **Benvenuto** Cellini (1500-1570), Florentine goldsmith and sculptor, a man of much daring and little scruple, left his own story in a picturesque and candid *Autobiography*.

p. 203, l. 19. **Pattison** (1813-1884), an Oxford critic of very wide learning.

p. 203, l. 31. **Fawcett**, Henry (1833-1884), although blinded in youth became a distinguished economist, and was appointed Postmaster General in 1880.

p. 203, l. 32. **Vanessa**, the pen-name of Esther Vanhomrigh, the devoted correspondent of Swift.

p. 204, l. 1. **Mason**, William (1724-1797), a fertile but forgotten writer of verse, was Gray's close friend. **Joseph Hill**, the attorney who managed Cowper's affairs and received his most playful letters, has no other claim to fame.

p. 204, l. 13. **Marco Polo** (1256-1323), the intrepid Venetian traveller who made remarkable journeys through the then unknown East.

p. 204, l. 26. **Irving**, Sir Henry (1838-1905), the most conspicuous actor of the reign of Queen Victoria.

p. 204, l. 30. **Congreve**, William (1670-1729), the wittiest of the dramatists of the Restoration period.

p. 206, l. 15. **maculæ**, spots or blotches.

p. 207, l. 10. **Confucius** (551-479 B.C.), the teacher on whose moral system the laws and education of China are based. Next to him in authority comes **Mencius** (400-316 B.C.).

p. 212, l. 21. **Jules Verne** (1828-1905), author of many very popular fantastic stories of adventure, generally with a scientific basis.

p. 214, l. 16. **Western gold-fields**. The most striking sketches of Californian mining life at this date were the work of Bret Harte (1839-1902). Many communistic societies have established themselves in the United States—some seventy existed when this lecture was delivered—but their history has usually been brief.

p. 214, l. 24. **Herbert Spencer** (1820-1903) was the author of a system of philosophy which sought to apply the doctrine of evolution to the whole of intellectual activity.

p. 216, l. 19. **herd of swine**. The Gadarene swine of *Matthew* viii. 32.













